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## THE SHORTYS ON THE ROAD; or, IN THE OLD BUSINESS JUST FOR FUN.

By PETER PAD.



His mouth was all drawn down to one side and tears chased each other down his face, each trying to be first in the race.  
He kept his feet going, but it was a funny sort of dance and had nothing to do with the time or the music  
or anything else. "Dat's right, Pop, keep it up," said Shorty, no one but Josiah hearing him,  
of course. "Yer doin' splendid, grandpop," echoed the kid. "Keep her going."

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# THE SHORTYS ON THE ROAD;

OR,

## IN THE OLD BUSINESS JUST FOR FUN.

By PETER PAD,

Author of "Little Tommy Bounce on His Travels," "Little Tommy Bounce; or, Something Like His Dad," "The Shortys Minstrels; or, Working the Same Old Rackets," "Our Future President; or, The Oak That Came From the Acorn," "Mrs. Brown's Boarding-House," "Our Landlord; or, Lite in French Flats," "Boarding School, or, Sam Bowser at Work and Play," "Henpecked," "Bulger Boom, the Inventor," "Sam; or, The Troublesome Foundling," "The Funny Four," "Joe Junk, the Whaler; or, Anywhere for Fun," "Behind the Scenes; or, Out With a New York Combination," "Smart & Co., the Boy Peddlers," "The Shortys Christmas Snaps," "The Shortys in the Wild West," "Jack Ready's School Scrapes," "A Rolling Stone; or, Jack Ready's Life of Fun," "The Shortys Christmas Rackets," "Those Quiet Twins," "Sam Spry, the New York Drummer," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I.

Of course you know the Shortys without my telling you.

Some few of you may not, however, and so I will introduce them.

Their name was not Shorty, although everybody called them that.

First, there was Josiah Burwick, a bald-headed old runt, the father of the original Shorty and usually known as the Old Man.

Shorty himself was originally christened George Burwick, but hardly anybody called him that.

Then there was his son Charlie, known as the Kid, and as mischievous a little rat as you would meet in a day's march.

After traveling around the world and everywhere else for some years the Shortys agreed to settle down. Shorty married a widow with two daughters, and then the Old Man and the Keidach took one of the daughters.

You can imagine the mix that the family relations got into after that.

Things were more mixed when each one of the trio became the happy father of a bouncing boy.

These boys were the Shorty Kids and were three regular chips of three jolly old blocks.

Well, at the time I introduce the family to your notice once more, the boys are jolly young fellows, old enough to know better, but as full of fun as you can imagine.

The whole tribe lived in a big house on Madison avenue in the city of New York, each branch having its separate apartments, and yet all living in common.

It required an army of servants to run that establishment; but the most of them had been in the family a long time and they knew just what to expect.

Ginger Jones, the colored butler, and Norah, the Irish cook, were the longest in service of any, and might have been expected to live harmoniously, but they didn't.

They were forever getting into rows, and each had threatened to leave, if the other were not discharged, a score of times.

However, we have nothing to do with that just now.

The Old Man Shorty and the Kid, likewise the three boys, were all seated in the cozy library one evening in the early autumn, when a disturbance was heard at the front door.

It was this very disturbance that caused me to write this chronicle of the Shorty family.

The angry voice of Ginger Jones was heard, like-

wise the protesting voice of some one else, who, no one could tell.

"Yo' can't see dem I tol' youse," the butler remarked, "an' dat settles it. Heah, yo' Mike, whar am youse?"

Mike was the coachman, and a regular Sullivan in physique.

"Wot's de matter now?" asked Shorty, getting up.

The boys had already gone out into the hall to investigate affairs.

"Mike has just thrown a tramp down-stairs," said Cal, the Old Man's son and heir.

His name was California, but that was too much of a mouthful, and Cal became his regular appellation.

Shorty's son, by the way, was called Peter, in honor of myself, although the young scamp has never reflected any credit on me that I can remember.

The Kid's son was called Ed after my young friend with the ears, and I am very grateful to Charlie for having thus avenged my wrongs on Mr. Ed, for his namesake is as mischievous a young ruffian as you want to know, and I feel that I am square at last with Ed for his many detractions of myself and farm.

Well, to return to the subject.

"That fellow just got the bounce, and no mistake," said Peter. "Ginger and Mike gave him the razoo in fine style."

"Dere must've been some mistake, pop," said Shorty, returning to the library. "That feller wasn't no tramp."

"If he was not Ginger would not have ejected him," said the Old Man in decided tones. "My butler knows his duty perfectly."

"Dat coon is just an old stuff," said Shorty.

The three boys would have echoed this sentiment for they were always getting into rows with Mr. Ginger Jones, and he had secured them lickings more than once.

"Maybe it was one of our old pals down on his luck come to see us," suggested the Kid.

"Well, we don't keep a poor-house," grunted the Old Man. "Let the authorities take care of them."

"I was down on me luck onst myself," muttered Shorty, "and de fellers dat helped me is allus sure of a square meal whenever dey want it."

"Dat's me, too," said the Kid; "and if dat feller was anybody we know I'll puta flea in dat coon's ear fur bouncing him."

"It was only an impostor, I tell you," persisted

the Old Man. "Ginger knows all our old acquaintances and would not refuse admittance to any of them, no matter how poor they might be."

"Maybe so," mused the Kid, "but I'll go you a ten spot he was wrong dis time."

The kid was right, as he usually was.

Ginger Jones had made a big mistake.

He had fled out one of the earliest and most faithful friends the Shortys had ever had.

The supposed tramp was Shanks.

You all remember Shanks, don't you?

He was the original manager of Shorty when that young joker first went into the minstrel business, and made lots of money both for himself and his star.

Afterwards he managed the Shortys' minstrels, headed by the Old Man, Shorty and the Kid, and made another pile.

Just now he was down on his luck.

He had lost all his money on a show, and had been obliged to walk seven hundred miles more or less to get back to New York.

He did not look very stylish to say the least, and Ginger, not recognizing him, fired him out.

Shanks was bound to see his old friends, however, and he began to think how he was going to do it.

"I want fixing up, that's what's the matter," he said to himself. "I was in too much of a hurry to see the boy and that's why I got bounced."

Then he went to a barber that he was acquainted with, got a shave and a hair cut, likewise a paper collar and a necktie, brushed his coat, polished his shoes and started out.

He was still pretty seedy, but looked respectable for all that. Once more he went to the Burwick mansion and rang the bell.

When the footman opened the door Shanks smiled, presented his card and said in a loud voice:

"Please tell Mr. Burwick, any of them, that Mr. Shanks wants to see him."

The library door was open this time and Charlie Burwick heard the remark of his old manager:

"Strike me silly if it ain't Shanks!" he cried, jumping up and rushing out to the door.

It did not take long, after that, to get Shanks in the library among his old friends.

"Hallo, Shanksey, old man!" said Shorty. "Glad to see you. How is things?"

"Very bad," said Shanks.

"Wot's der matter?"

"Show busted away out West, and I had to walk seventeen hundred miles."

"That's bad."

"Yes, it is," assented Shanks; "but I can get on my feet again and be all right if you will only help me."

"You know that we are always willing to help our old friends," said the Old Man.

"Blowed if I don't sign a check and let yer fill it up just how you like," put in Shorty.

"Just say how much you want and you kin have it, Shanksy," added the Kid.

"No, I don't want to take any money," said Shanks, "but I tell you what I wish you would do."

"Wot's dat?" asked Shorty.

"Let me take you out on the road again. If you'll do that and start the show going I'll pull up in two weeks, and I'll never leave you again."

Shorty winked at the Kid, and the Kid grinned expressively at his funny little dad.

The faces of the boys beamed with delight, but the Old Man looked very solemn.

Finally Shorty broached the subject.

"What do you say, pop? Would yer go on der road with Shanks?"

"No!"

There was no doubting the determination of that little word.

It meant business every time, and all the time.

Shanks looked blank, the boys let their jaws fall, and the Kid stopped grinning.

Shorty would not give the thing up so easily, however.

"Oh, come on, pop," he said. "What have you got against Shanks?"

"Nothing, George," said the Old Man, relaxing a little.

"Don't yer want to see him get on?"

"Yes."

"Den why don't yer help him?"

"He can have all the money he wants, George."

"I won't take a penny," said Shanks, firmly, "unless you advance it to start the show."

"Come on, grandpop," said Charlie. "Wot's der matter with you?"

"I am too old to go on the road. If you want to get up your show go ahead. I'll back you, but you'll have to leave me out."

"How kin we do dat?" asked Shorty, in disgust. "What's me and der Kid without you in the middle?"

"Can't we go too?" cried Pete. "We can sing and dance."

"You can't leave us out," added Cal. "Oh, I say, papa, do go with us."

Then the whole gang got at the Old Man.

"Go on, pop. Wot yer kickin' at?"

"We want you, grandpop, de wurst way."

"Ah, yes, do, papa."

"Won't you, grandfather?"

"I really wish you would, Mr. Burwick."

"Ah, say, don't be a clam, pop."

Josiah shook his head.

He was deaf to all entreaties, and nothing could move him.

He would lend Shanks any sum he would choose to ask for, without security, but he would not go on the road.

"I am too old, I tell you," he repeated, "and it's no use to ask me. I'll back the thing to any amount, but I will not go with you, and that is final."

Shanks looked very glum at this, and as he arose to go, said:

"Well, that settles it, then, and I'm very sorry. The people will want all the Shortys, and if you don't go I shall have to give the thing up, I suppose."

Shorty winked at Shanks, and the manager felt encouraged.

The Kid went to the door with him, and said in a whisper:

"Never you mind, Shanks. Don't you get discouraged. Dad has got some scheme in his nodle and we'll fetch der Old Man around yet, and don't you forget it."

"I hope you will," said Shanks, "for that's the only thing that'll set me on my feet."

Shanks went away, and no more was said to Josiah that night about the project of going once more into the old business.

Shorty did not care for the money he would make out of it, for he had enough and to spare, but he did want the fun and so did the Kid.

That night he spoke to his wife about it, picturing the wretched condition of poor Shanks in true Rembrandtish colors and upbraiding his hard-hearted parent for his cruel obstinacy in refusing so simple a request.

Oh, he was a dandy, he was, for appealing to a woman's feelings.

Kate, his wife, got after Josiah's wife the next day and told her it was a shame that the old man was so pig-headed.

Charlie's wife also had something to say, and the result was that the three women all agreed that Mr. Burwick was acting shamefully in refusing to help poor Mr. Shanks.

The whole lot of them got at the Old Man that very day.

Shorty and the kid did the pathetic act and helped the thing on first-rate.

Those young rascals went to the Old Man with tears in their eyes and made a dead set at him.

"Yer just a hard-hearted old duffer, dat's wot yer are, boo-hoo, to let ole Shanksey go to de poor house," blubbered Shorty.

"Yer've got more money now dan yer know wot ter do with, boo-hoo-hoo, and yer won't go inter dis ting just for fun and help yer ole friend," sobbed Charlie.

Then the women put in their oars, although they were honest about it all.

"It's just a shame that you won't help the poor man."

"Just think of what he did for George and Charlie when they had nothing."

"If you don't help him out now, Josiah Burwick, I'll never speak to you as long as I live, and I'll take Cal and go off by myself."

Josiah was not adamant, and when Shorty and the Kid hid their fat faces in their silk wipes and began to shake with pent up emotion, he had to yield.

"Well, I'll go," he said, "on one condition."

"Wot's dat, pop?" asked Shorty, with a broken voice, though he was dying to laugh, the humbug.

"There must be no funny business," said Josiah, decidedly.

"How kin yer run a minstrel show without funny business, pop?"

"You know what I mean very well, George," grunted Josiah.

"Blessed if I do, governor."

"I mean that there must be no more practical jokes. I am too old for that and I won't have it."

"Why, nobody plays rackets on you no more, pop."

"Well, you see that they do not, or I shall leave the show and go straight home."

"Ah, you wouldn't do dat."

"Yes, I would."

"Well, dere ain't no one goin' ter play roots on yer, so don't yer fret," said Charlie.

"Then there's one thing more," said Josiah.

"Spit it out, pop."

"Ginger must go along with me to look after me and help me dress."

"Take der bull house if yer want ter, pop. We kin have wheels put on it and send it over der road. Beats private cars all holler, dat does."

When the Shorty Kids heard that Ginger was going along, they held a council of war.

"That old coon will be spying on us all the time," said Cal.

"Won't we roast him, though," observed [my namesake, young Peter Pad Burwick.

"We'll make him sick if he puts on any frills with us," added Ed.

You can just bet that Ginger would get it hot and heavy from those boys if he tried any nonsense after that.

It having been settled that the Shortys were going on the road again, it was only necessary to acquaint Shanks with the fact and tell him to go ahead.

He was supplied with money and told to sling himself all he wanted, to make out a route beginning at New York and ending at San Francisco, and to make as long stops as he chose.

As they were in the old business just for fun, Shorty and the Kid cared nothing for expense and even if they made no money out of it, it was all the same.

The whole tribe was going, boys, women and all, for the mothers wanted to look after the kids and desired to travel and see the country as well.

A car was chartered to take the Burwicks wherever the show went and all the style possible was put on.

"Hang de expense, anyhow!" laughed Shorty. "We're in de ole business just for fun and we're going ter have it, you bet, and get ole Shanks out of a hole."

The Old Man did not want to open in New York, but Shorty wanted to give the show a good send off and Josiah's objections were overruled.

Shanks worked like a badger for a couple of weeks and got up a dandy show, calculated to knock all his previous efforts clean out.

He engaged forty or fifty of the best minstrels in the profession, together with a brass band and flooded the country with fine printing matter announcing the coming of the Shortys.

He secured the Academy of Music in New York for a week and opened to a bang-up big house, Shorty having a legion of friends in the city who were glad to see him once more with cork on his jolly mug.

We haven't much to say about the New York engagement, for this story is about the Shortys on the road, and so we must skip along.

That week in New York was a boom, and Shanks knew that his fortune was made.

The whole crowd migrated to Philadelphia the following week and opened at the opera house, for Shanks had taken the biggest theaters and was doing things on the grandest scale.

The curtain went up, showing a packed house on one side of the footlights and a fine stage picture on the other.

Our old friends were all in their accustomed places, and the big house cheered when the three Shortys were recognized.

The Old Man was in the middle, the Kid had the tambourine and Shorty rattled the bones.

The balance of the horseshoe was filled in with singers, twenty of them, and behind, on terraced platforms, were the musicians and a choir of boys, all first-class artists.

After the opening chorus in skipped the three Shorty Kids, dressed in nobby suits, and did a jig in the center of the stage in front of the semicircle.

That took the crowd and Shanks had to bow his acknowledgments from a private box, while the boys danced their prettiest and the three older Shortys had to put on their broadest smiles.

The show was a go and no error, and that big theater was packed solidly every night for two weeks, and could have been for two more if Shorty had chosen to remain.

However, as our jolly little friends were in the thing for fun, it was quite likely they had plenty of it.

The Old Man was spared until such time as things got in good working order, but there were plenty more victims besides him.

The three Shorty Kids had long had it in for Ginger, as that cranky coon had pestered them for many years when they were little fellows.

Many were the lickings he had procured for them when they were not too big to take them, and those boys remembered every one.

That coon had been their enemy for years but now that they were too big to thump they were resolved to get hunk.

They had worked off many rackets upon him in the old days but they had nearly always been whacked for it and they therefore had a longing to get up a good snap on the coon and get clear of punishment for the same.

Cal, who was fallaciously supposed to be a good young fellow and above playing practical jokes, was the first one to suggest a snap on Ginger Jones.

"I want to make that old coon very tired," he said to Peter and Ed, "and get square on him once for all."

"He may tell on us," said Peter, "but he can't get us licked any more."

"We'll do him up," said Ed, "and if he kicks we'll do him up again."

That point being settled, it was necessary to agree upon the way in which Ginger was to be done up.

The coon used to go with the Old Man to the theater every night, so as to look after him, dress him and wait on him, but especially to prevent his sons and grandsons from playing larks upon him.

Ginger was a high-toned moke, as was quite proper for the traveling companion of a respectable old gentleman like Mr. Burwick, and no fault could be found with his style and deportment.

He wore a dress suit and a high choker collar, and his bald head rivaled his shiny shirt front in polish, his white ear-locks bristling on either side of his head like two sentinels on the watch for invaders.

He was not going to let anyone take any liberties with his master, Ginger was not, and he kept a constant lookout for larks, rackets and snaps of all sorts.

The Shorty Kids seldom worked off snaps upon Josiah, but Ginger was a fair mark for their shafts, and they made up their minds to give him a roasting at the earliest opportunity.

Meanwhile, let us look in upon the minstrel show while the boys are thinking up their little snap upon Ginger.

The old man, in the middle, looking as wise as an owl, is listening to Shorty who has just put him a question.

"What is that, George? Please repeat."

"I axed you what was de diff between a load of hay and a cart wheel?"

"Why, there's no sense in that, George."

"Dat's why he said it," piped up the Kid. "He don't know nuthin', he don't."

"Den you've caught it from me, Kiddy," returned Shorty, "for you know less'n nuthin', you do."

"I'll smash your jaw," muttered the Kid, pretending to be very angry.

"Boys, boys, stop that racket," cried the Old Man. "I'll put you both out if you don't."

"Den make him stop sassing me," said Shorty.

"If he does that you ought to punish him. That's what I always used to do to you."

"Ha-ha, George used to get licked!" chuckled

the Kid. "Ha! ain't you ashamed? Got licked! ha-ha, got licked!"

"Stop your noise, Charles," said the Old Man.

"Now then, George, what was your question?"

"That wasn't any good," sneered the Kid. "I'll give you a daisy."

"Very well. What is it?"

"What's the best time to go hunting?"

"When you lose your collar button," sang out Shorty.

"Ah, you shut up, dad, and don't be so funny."

"Ain't that the answer?"

"No."

"What is it then?"

"Don't you know?"

"When you're out of a job. It takes a lot of hunting to get one these days."

"Well, dat ain't it."

"When is der best time to go hunting, smarty?"

"When the old woman wants some money for a new bonnet."

"What do yer have to hunt then for?"

"To find der money. If you don't, she'll hunt you."

"Ah, that's no good. My one was better than that."

"What was yours?"

"What's de best place to plant corn?"

"On some other fellow's toes."

"Nixey."

"Where is the best place to plant corn then?"

"In the ground, stupid! Where else would you plant it?"

"Well, where's der best place to plant your money?"

"In the bank."

"Nope."

"In a house."

"Nary."

"In your pocket."

"Ah, go on."

"Where, then?"

"In your wife's pocket."

"What fur?"

"Sealskins, I guess."

"No, I mean what for?"

"Cause she'll never look for it there."

"Well, now, what's the difference between a load of hay and a cart wheel?"

"Give it up."

"Can't you tell the difference?"

"No."

"Den you must be blind, dat's all," and Shorty chuckled, and tried to poke his head through his tambourine.

"Little Annie Rooney," remarked the Old Man, nodding to one of the star vocalists.

"I know dat gal," chirped the Kid. "Her mother used to go hunting for butts in the gutters."

"No, sir, this is not the person you mean," said the Old Man. "This is a song—a ballad."

"Yes, I know dat. Annie was in der ballet, but she mashed der feller dat beat der bass drum, and he come in at der wrong time, and got bounced."

"No, sir, you are wrong. This is not that girl at all."

"Well, den it's her sister, and they're twins. I know all them Rooney girls. Dey was de Rooney-ation of all der peanut men on the avenue. Used to swipe a handful every time dey went by der stands."

"Shut up, Kid," said Shorty.

"Won't do it. Wait till you hear me sing. Little Annie Rooney won't stand no show at all when I begin to warble."

"Well, I s'pose we are got to let you just to keep you quiet. Go on with the execution."

Charlie then opened his mouth till it looked like the opening of a coal cellar, and shot off something like this:

"There once was a fellow who thought it was fine

To talk back to his mother-in-law.

But she gave him a racket and dusted his jacket

And landed him one on the jaw.

He thought it was clever to make an endeavor

To make her shut up, the big dunce;

The old woman laid him out with a blow upon the snout,

And he only tried it once.

"There was another fellow said he'd walk upon the air,

And cause all the folks for to wonder;

So he jumped out of the winder when there was none to hinder,

And he went right straight to thunder.

He thought it was worth trying to do a little flying,

The wooden headed old dunce.

He thought he couldn't fail, he was picked up in a

pail,

And he only tried it once.

"A fellow good at writing took the notion of inditing

Some other fellow's name to a check;

For he didn't like to work and he didn't want to

starve,

But he got it right in the neck.

So he forged for several hundred, oh, dear! how he blundered,

The conceited little dunces.

He was caught and sent to prison, a hard time is his'n,

And he only tried it once."

"Don't you try to sing any more, Kiddy," said Shorty, "because you don't know how, no more'n a cat."

However, the audience laughed, all the same, and the Kid had to put on two or three additions to his song before they would let up on him.

Just about this time the Shorty Kids, having finished for a time, took a look into the Old Man's dressing-room.

The door was wide open, and so there was no harm in doing so.

There sat Ginger Jones in a big arm-chair, fast asleep.

What a picnic!

## CHAPTER II.

GINGER JONES, the colored coon sat fast asleep in Old Man Burwick's dressing-room at the theater, while the three Shorty Kids stood watching him through the open door.

Those boys had promised themselves to get hunk on that moke, and now here was the opportunity.

"Doesn't he look dizzy in his swallow-tail?" said Cal.

"He'd look better in a Sing Sing jacket," returned Peter.

"Let's give it to him them," said Ed.

A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, and all that those boys wanted was a suggestion.

Off they ran to the property room of the theater, and presently returned with a pot of white paint and three brushes.

Then they proceeded to stripe that dandy coon's garments for him in the most approved Sing Sing fashion.

Coat, vest and trousers got it, and Ginger looked like a real convict when the boys had finished with him.

"There! I guess Pop will be surprised when he sees that coon," laughed Cal.

"He'll give Ginge fits in the bargain," added Ed, "and that's what we want."

The music of the final chorus in the first part was heard at that moment, and the boys skipped out in order to avoid meeting the old man.

Josiah presently came in, saw Ginger sitting there rigged up like a jail bird and instantly dusted.

"George, Charlie, come here quick," he gasped, as he hurried along the passage.

"What's der matter, Pop?" asked Shorty, who was taking off his dress coat.

"There's a convict got in my dressing room."

"Oh, I say, ain't yer puttin' up a job on us, Grandpop?" asked the Kid.

"A job!" scornfully repeated the old man.

"No, sir! You know I never put up jobs. I disapprove of them entirely and you know that I had it distinctly understood that I would not go on this trip if anything of the sort was tried."

"Oh, yes, you're a sober old duffer, you are," muttered Shorty. "You would not play a trick on us if you had a good chance, would yer? Oh, no, of course not."

"But I tell you there's no trick about it, George," protested Mr. Burwick. "There's a great big black convict asleep in my room and I can't go in."

"We'll fix his jiglets for you," said Shorty. "Come on, Kiddy; you get a club and I'll take a brick."

Shorty loaded his arms with red morocco property bricks and Charlie procured a big stuffed club, and then they preceded the old man to his room.

Shorty looked in, for Josiah had left the door open.

The little runt tumbled to the whole racket at once.

He recognized Ginger without having to put on specs, and guessed who had made the transformation in him.

"Dat's a good gag," he chuckled, "and here's another."

Then he proceeded to pelt Ginger Jones with the property bricks.

He was a dandy shot, and he put every one of those stuffed bricks where he desired.

Biff!

Smack!

Whack!

The first took Ginger on the nose, the second carromed on his right eye, and the third bounced off his forehead.

There were more after that, for it fairly rained bricks, and every one hit the mark.

Up jumped Ginger in alarm, and made a break for the door.

"Hol' on, boss, hol' on!" he yelled. "Wha' yo' doin' on anyhow? I isn't asleep."

"Why, it's Ginger!" cried Mr. Burwick.

"Stop, boys, stop, don't you see it's Ginger?"

The boys saw that plainly enough, but they did not stop all the same.

Shorty used up all his bricks, and by that time

Ginger had reached the door.

Then the kid warmed him with the club and made him jump.

"Now! yo' stop o' dat!" howled the coon.

The kid only pasted him all the more, and Ginger, in his haste to get away, upset the old man, and fled down the passage.

The Shorty kids were waiting for him, and each had something to give him when he appeared.

Cal let him have a bucket of water in his shirt front that just took away his breath.

Peter gave him a kick in the shins, and Ed cracked him over the head with a split stick used in one of the farces.

"Wow!" howled Ginger, making a break for the first door.

It led into the street, but he did not know this till he was outside.

"What de mattah wif all dem fellahs anyhow?" he muttered. "Just 'cause I took a lilly bit ob a nap dey gotter club de head off me. I tell de Ole Man 'bout dat, see if I don't."

Just then, however, along came a Philadelphia copper, who seeing Ginger under a street lamp, got right onto his penitentiary rig.

"Aha! an escaped convict!" he muttered.

"Here is a prize, sure enough."

Then he waltzed up, grabbed Ginger by the collar and remarked:

"I want you, my man. Just you come along peaceable, or I'll blow the whole top of your head off!"

"I ain't done nuffin', boss!" gasped the poor coon, beginning to tremble. "I b'longs in yer, I does. I'se Mistah Burwick's col'd ge'man, I is."

"You belong in jail, that's where you belong," said the copper. "You've got your convict clothes on yet."

Then he proceeded to lug off that unhappy coon, despite his protests.

It would have fared badly with Ginger Jones, Esquire, if Shorty and the Kid had not come to his rescue just then.

They had seen him dash out of that door, and knew the sensation he would be apt to create on the street.

"Hold on, pard," cried Shorty, rushing out as the copper was running Ginger off. "That coon is all right. He belongs to the show."

"Oh, Marse Gawge, don't let de pleeceman took me off!" cried Ginger. "I hain't done nuffin' tall."

"He's all right, Mr. Cop," said the Kid. "Dat's on'y a show rig he's got on, dat's all. He ain't done nothing."

Just then Ginger caught sight of his striped clothes.

"Fo' goodness sakes, wha' de mattah wif my close?" he gasped. "De Ole Man be bery mad when he see dat."

As Josiah insisted that Ginger should always attend him in a dress suit, and as the present one was hardly the thing, and a new one must be procured, it would not be surprising if the Old Man were wrath at the change.

The copper surrendered his charge and Ginger went into the theater where the first person he saw was Josiah.

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded that angry Old Man. "Do you think I can buy your clothes for you to ruin in that style. Go and change your things at once."

Josiah could get very mad upon occasions and this was one of the times.

He lifted one of his short, fat legs and planted his foot at the base of Ginger's spine with no gentle touch.

"Wow!" yelled the coon. "Don' know nuffin' 'bout de close an' how dey get dat a way. Reckon some ob dem bad boys do dat when I was asleep."

"This thing has gone too far," he muttered, "and I am going home to-night."

"What fur, pop?" asked Shorty.

"I said I wouldn't have any practical jokes, and here you are beginning them in spite of my protests."

"We don't know nuthin' 'bout that," said Charlie; "and, anyhow, de job wasn't on you at all."

"That doesn't make any difference. I'm going home to-night."

"You ain't got no place to go to," said Shorty. "Ain't de house shut up?"

"I can go to a hotel, I guess," sputtered Josiah.

"And, besides, it's my house. I shall take Angie

week's stay in Quakerdom, those funny fellows got Shank's to advertise a triple song and dance by the three Shortys, and to scatter dodgers all over the city announcing the same.

Shanks thought it had all been fixed up with the Old Man, of course, and, as he knew it would be a big thing, he gave it an extra large line on the house bill for that evening.

It had not been fixed up with the Old Man, however, and that ancient and highly respectable party knew nothing about it.

That is to say, not at first, though he was bound to hear of it in the end.

The first part was over and a musical-mime act was on when Shorty and the Kid, dressed as dan-

"No."

"Oh, oh!" and the two little runts held up their hands.

"No, you didn't!" repeated Josiah.

"Oh, Pop! And you de super in de Sunday school!"

"Didn't think you'd lie like dat, grandpop!"

"But you never did," persisted the Old Man, "and I can't dance."

"Oh, yes, you can and you gotter. You don't want ter spoil der show, do yer?"

At this juncture Shanks came along and remarked:

"Ah, getting ready for the dance, are you? It'll



His mouth was all drawn down to one side and tears chased each other down his face, each trying to be first in the race.

He kept his feet going, but it was a funny sort of dance and had nothing to do with the time or the music or anything else. "Dat's right, Pop, keep it up," said Shorty, no one but Josiah hearing him, of course. "Yer doin' splendid, grandpop," echoed the Kid. "Keep her going."

and Cal and Ginger and go right back this very night." fancy coons, went to Josiah's room, taking a be a great act, and the folks outside are expecting a big treat."

"All right," said the Kid. "Go home, if you like, you ole stuff. Der show kin get along without you. We'll put Shanksy in der middle and go right on fust-class."

Now Josiah had an idea that his presence added to the drawing powers of the show, and to be told, therefore, that they could get along just as well without as with him, was a big blow to his pride.

"Well," he muttered, getting up, "as long as the joke was not intended for me, I will overlook it, but I want you to understand that I won't have any more of it, no matter whether it is meant for me or not."

Then he went away with the air of the Grand Mogul, while George and Charlie just chuckled and thought that was the best thing yet.

It must not be supposed that those two jokers would refrain from playing rackets on Josiah merely because the latter had said that he would not have it.

They might be more cautious in working up their snaps, but the snaps would be there all the same.

On Saturday night, which would end their first

It was a short white dress, all frills and tucks, striped stockings and long frilled pantaloons and a big white sun-bonnet went with it.

Anybody else would have looked funny in it, but just you imagine Josiah Burwick rigged out in such an affair.

"Come on, pop," said Shorty. "Here's your dress. Put it on quick. We're in a hurry."

"Put that thing on!" gasped Josiah. "I! You must be crazy, George."

"No. I ain't. It's fur de dance. Don't yer remember?"

"The dance! What dance? I don't dance, George."

"Ah, go on, yes, you do, you and me and Chawles."

"I can't dance," said Mr. Burwick, "and I wouldn't, if I could."

"Ah, yes, you can. It's easy, and it'll be a great act."

"But you never said a word to me about it, and I can't go on without a rehearsal."

"Never said nuthin' about it, didn't we?" cried the two jokers.

"I never said I would dance, and I don't know anything about it," said the Old Man.

"Oh, my, what stories that old duffer kin tell!" remarked the Kid.

"Just listen to him," added Shorty. "He says he won't dance."

Shanks began to get alarmed.

He knew what it was to disappoint an audience, and always avoided it.

The big house expected that dance, and he meant that they should have it.

"Why, you must dance, Mr. Burwick," he said, eagerly. "You'll ruin the show if you don't. It's on the bill, and they are all expecting it."

"But I can't dance," sighed Josiah. "I've got the rheumatism, and I haven't danced in forty years."

"But you must," said Shanks. "The people will never forgive me if you don't."

"Oh, yes, stick to it and bust up poor old Shanks, pop," said Shorty. "Dat's just like yer, goin' back on a old friend."

"Yes, and after he's done so much fur yer and all," put in the Kid, taking the cue from his funny

little dad. "I didn't t'ink you'd be so mean, grandpop."

"Well, I don't see why you can't let me wear the same kind of clothes you do," sighed the Old Man. "Just think how I'd look in those things."

The poor old fellow was nearly crying, but those two bad boys would not let up on him.

"Why, that'll make it all the funnier," said Shanks, who did not know that the whole thing was a job.

"Of course it will," said Shorty.

"Cert!" added the Kid.

"Dat's de funny part of it. Me and de Kid is both in love with yer, and goes to see yer and den we all does dis dance."

"But I can't dance, George," sobbed the Old Man. "Can't you get one of the boys?"

"Too late, Mr. Burwick," said Shanks. "You're on the bill and the public don't want to see any one else."

"Dere goes de bell for de encore of de musical moke act," said Shorty. "You ain't got no time to lose, pop."

The Old Man looked very sad and tears began to make tracks across his blackened cheeks.

Shanks helped him dress and he certainly did look very funny in that short dress, long pantalottes and big sun bonnet.

He did not feel funny, however, and he looked decidedly solemn as he took his place behind the door of the set cottage on the right of the stage.

The flats separated, showing a pretty landscape with a vine-covered cottage, a white picket fence and flowery banks at the rear.

In came Shorty and the Kid dressed as dandy coons and looking tip-top.

They talked about their gal for a few moments and then both made a break for the door of the cottage.

They grabbed the Old Man by the hands and led him to the middle of the stage, and then there was a racket, and no mistake.

Shorty and the Kid as fancy coons, and the Old Man as a funny wench was enough to set the house in a roar, and it did.

Then the dance began, the Old Man in the middle, Shorty on one side and the Kid on the other.

You never saw such a doleful looking old Job as Josiah was, however.

His mouth was all drawn down to one side and tears chased each other down his face, each trying to be first in the race.

He kept his feet going, but it was a funny sort of dance and had nothing to do with the time or the music or anything else.

"Dat's right, Pop, keep it up," said Shorty, no one but Josiah hearing him of course.

"Yer doin' splendid, grandpop," echoed the Kid. "Keep her going."

The audience thought it was very funny and cheered and clapped and stamped.

Mr. Burwick did not think it funny for a very good reason.

"Dat's right, let her go!" said Shorty.

Then he threw back one of his feet and caught the Old Man in the rear.

"Yer doin' bully, Ole Man," said the Kid.

At the same time he also spurred that poor old individual, his grandfather.

Then Shorty got in another kick, followed by Charlie a moment later.

The crowd in front did not get onto it but Josiah did, you bet.

No wonder that he looked and felt sad.

"Stop that, boys," he whined. "You hurt."

The boys went on dancing and the Old Man had to do the same, despite the kicks and spurs he got.

"Stop that, I tell you!" he at last vociferated, getting mad.

Patience was a virtue no longer, and Josiah had his back very much elevated.

Shorty and the Kid each gave him one more sly kick, and good ones they were too.

By this time Josiah was rip-tearing, raving, staving mad.

He pulled away his hands and struck right and left, taking George and Charlie smack in the face. This time Josiah tallied, with a two-bagger to his credit.

Smack!

Whack!

Those were no gentle love taps, you may be sure. Those two jokers suddenly sat down on the stage, looking pretty silly, and the mad Old Man made a break for the cottage door.

A stage manager thought that was a good place to stop, and so he had a scene shoved on in front, and the female impersonator went on and warbled operatic melodies.

George looked at Charlie, and the latter grinned as he remarked:

"Got any jaw left, dad?"

"Don't know, Kiddy. How's yours?"

"Feels kind of all broke up, dad."

"I say, Chawles?"

"What is it, Gawgy, dear?"

"If der Ole Man can't dance, he can strike out putty good, can't he?"

"Reckon we're de blokies wat's been struck out, dad."

"Take yer base, Chawles."

"I've got it, dad."

These funny chaps had worked off one on the Old Man, but he had got square with them, and that was something after all.

Shanks thought that the whole thing was regular, and resolved to have that act in the bill every night.

The Old Man would probably have something to say about that himself, however, and Shorty and the Kid would no doubt want the finale changed a bit before the act was repeated.

Josiah went off to the dressing-room, got out of that costume in a hurry, jawed Ginger for laughing at him, and then said in peppery tones:

"Well! I gave them one dose anyway, and I don't think they'll want to get off any more jokes right away."

"Dat yer jig was de funnies' ting I eber see," said Ginger, beginning to laugh again.

Josiah grabbed up a cake of soap and let fly with it, taking Ginger slap in the mouth.

"Don't you dare laugh at me, you black rascal!" he sputtered, "and don't you express your opinions until they are called for, confound you."

Ginger dug the soap out of his mouth and he ped his master to change his clothes without any remarks or laughter after that.

That coon had been a long time in Mr. Burwick's service, and he knew when it was wise and when not, to open his mouth.

"Confoun' dis show business anyhow," he muttered, when he was at liberty. "De Ole Man amn't hese'f at all dese days. Neber did see him so cross."

"Reckon Marse Gawge an' Marse Charlie do suffin' to stir him up mo'n common, else he wouldn't light out on me like o' dat."

"It am all de fault ob dish yer business anyhow, an' I knows de ole ge'man don' like it, an' no mo' does I, but dem two fellahs jist does wha' dey likes. Reckon now I won' hab no peace 'tall till we gits home agin."

He was very likely in the right, for of course, Shorty and the Kid would not allow the account to stand against them that way.

### CHAPTER III.

THE Shortys opened their second week in Philadelphia to as good a business as during the first, and could have stayed all the season if they had chosen.

As Carneross and Dixey were about to open their own season, however, and they were both old friends of Shorty, our jolly young runt would not run his show counter to theirs, and this was to be their last week in Quakertown.

The Old Man concluded not to go home immediately, although he had threatened to do so.

The fact was, he had got the best of Shorty and the Kid in their last little racket on him, and that put him into a fairly good humor.

Those two jokers were not beaten, however, for one repulse was not a campaign by any means.

They let one day go by without playing any jokes on the Old Man, but they were laying for him just the same.

"Say, Shanksey," said Shorty to the manager one night, "de Ole Man is putty pop'lar, ain't he?"

"Yes, oh, yes, quite so," said Shanks.

"Den it would be a big ting for der Kid and me to make him a present of a watch on der stage, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, indeed, it would be a great go, George," said the delighted manager.

He was in for anything that would draw attention to the show, he was.

The papers would be full of accounts of the presentation, he knew, and that would be a good advertisement and help along the business.

"Dat's wot we thought," said Shorty, "and so der Kid an me, we thought we'd give the governor a watch on der stage some night just as a mark of our esteem an' all dat, don't yer know."

"A very good idea, George, and I know the old gentleman will be greatly pleased."

"Oh, yes, cert, he's bound to be, of course," replied Shorty.

"Well, how are you going to do it and when?"

"De watch is all ready, and I guess to-night will be as good as any time."

"Certainly, just as a good. How will you do it? Call him on the stage and give it to him?"

"No, dat'll be too stiff. Couldn't you get him to do that wench business over again? We could give it to him then, after der dance."

"H'm! I'm afraid not. He would not let me put that in the bill again."

"Well, you kind o' talk to him, and maybe you kin fix it. Dat'll be der best way to do it."

"Well, I'll see," muttered Shanks.

Just before dinner he went to the Old Man and suggested the thing.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Burwick. "No more dances for me. I got ahead of the boys that time, but they'll be laying for me the next. No, sir, you can't catch me twice with the same bait."

"You don't really think I had anything to do with it the other time, do you, Mr. Burwick?" said Shanks.

"No, of course not, but I'm not to be caught again."

"Well, I'll let you into a bit of a secret, though I ought not to say anything at all about it, I suppose."

Then Shanks told about the proposed watch presentation and how it was to be done.

Josiah was visibly affected and even sniffled.

"Well, well, and so they're going to give me a watch?" he said, wiping his moist nose.

"Yes."

"Well, they're pretty good boys after all, and I ought not to blame them for letting their spirits run away with them at times," observed Josiah after a pause.

"Oh, they're all right, Mr. Burwick," put in Shanks.

"Yes, I think they are, although I do get terribly angry with them sometimes."

"Oh, that's only natural, of course. You'll do this dance, won't you, to-night? You see it will facilitate matters."

"How so?"

"Well, there'll be an encore, of course. You can slip off your dress, put on a dress coat, and go on with the boys, and then the presentation will take place. You mustn't let them know that you know anything about it, though."

"Oh, I won't," said Josiah. "After all they're good boys, if they do cut up now and again."

"To be sure they are," retorted Shanks, heartily, "and you need not be afraid that they will kick you to-night."

"Well, I'll do it, though you know I can't dance, at least not very well," answered Josiah, feeling tickled and flattered and touched, all at one time.

Shanks was to be imposed upon as well as the Old Man, but he did not know it.

The Old Man could never have been induced to go on and do that wench business again, if Shanks had not persuaded him, and those jokers knew it.

When the time for the act came, Shanks stepped in front of the footlights, and said with a smile:

"Ladies and gentlemen, the three Shortys will now do their celebrated and unrivaled triple song and dance, by universal request, and will conclude the act with a surprise."

That fetched down the house, of course, and then the scene opened and the stage was shown set with the landscape and the cottage and the flowery banks, as before.

The dance was gone through with, Shorty and the Kid as the dude coons, and the Old Man as the funny wench, greatly to the amusement of the large audience.

Then they all skipped out, and of course there was a big demand for more.

"Put on yer dress-coat, pop," said Shorty, in the wings, "and come out and bow. Yer won't have ter dance any more."

Josiah knew what was coming, or thought he did, and readily consented.

There was a loud outcry for the three favorites and presently they all appeared, the Old Man in full evening dress and the two boys in their dancing rig.

The three bowed, and the big audience applauded until Shorty put up his hand to obtain silence.

"Pop," he said, when all was quiet, "me and der Kid wants to make yer a present to show how much we thinks of yer. Will yer take it?"

"Really, my dear boys, you do me too much honor," said the Old Man, smiling and blushing and feeling just too deliciously happy for anything.

"I accept your gift with pleasure."

"All right, den," said Shorty. "Kid, fetch out der ticker."

The Kid skipped into the wings and hauled out a huge watch three feet in diameter, to which was fastened a regular cable.

"Dere you go, Ole Man," he said. "De watch is yours, an' when you wear it, tink of us."

The crowd howled with delight, and cheered, but the Old Man looked disgusted.

Suddenly Shorty touched a spring in the watch, the case flew open and out jumped Cal, in black tights and red trunks and began whirling all over the stage.

He had been curled up inside the case of the big watch, which was sufficiently roomy for him, only awaiting the signal to do his new act invented by Shorty.

The Old Man was very mad for he thought he was going to have such a nice time, and here he had only been made a fool of.

Away he went in a rage and then Shorty and the Kid skipped out, leaving Cal to do the boneless wonder act, being presently joined by the other two Shorty Kids, one in red and the other in green tights and made up as imps.

Those three lively chaps went through a regular acrobatic act, posturing, tumbling and all that sort of business, and lastly, Shorty and the Kid made up as black-faced clowns, came on and helped to wind up the act.

It took first rate and was quite new, not having been announced, but Josiah was mad all the same.

After the show he went to Shanks and said, angrily:

"You're a nice friend of mine, you are. You

By the time he had recovered, wiped and replaced his crockery masticators, he had somewhat gotten over his rage and said no more about it.

The gymnastic act of the boys was repeated the next night and took immensely, and as Cal got the most applause, the Old Man was greatly mollified.

He still said something about going home, however, and he might have done so if he had not just now found a chance to play a dandy return snap upon Shorty.

However, something else happened before that came off and I must take things in order.

It was not often that Shorty or the Kid roasted

"Take something for what?" asked Shanks in astonishment.

"Dat paralysis of yours. You are got it bad, old man."

"Paralysis!" shouted Shanks. "I haven't got paralysis."

"Well, I never see the signs of it so plain on a feller before."

"Nor me. Yer in a bad way, I tell yer."

"But I tell you I haven't got it," protested Shanks. "I'm as strong as ever I was."

"You certainly ought to do something for it if you have got it, Mr. Shanks," remarked Josiah.

Shorty and the Kid looked so sober that the Old Man was completely deceived.



"Ladies and gen'men, I comes befo' youse dis ebenin' to disgust you on the question of de rights ob ebery man to hab a equal share in dish yer earth and enjoy de same privileges dat every other fellow does nevertheless, notwithstanding, however, moreover, on the other hand."

just helped those two fellows to make a fool of me."

"Upon my word I did not, Mr. Burwick," protested poor Shanks.

"Fine watch presentation that was, wasn't it? It just made a fool of me, that's what it did."

"Really, Mr. Burwick, you—"

"I know what I'll do, though. I'll just take my son and go right back to New York. I didn't want him to go into the business anyhow."

"Yes, but think how successful—"

"I don't care anything about that," sputtered the Old Man. "If George and Charlie want their boys to go on that's all right, but my boy is made for something better, and I won't allow him to be disgraced. I'm going straight back to New York to-night."

The older Josiah grew the more irascible he became, and when he got his mad up he was a terror.

Shanks tried to reason with him, but the more he talked the madder Josiah grew.

Finally that mad Old Man began to cough and grow red in the face, and finally he coughed out his false teeth.

Without them he could not utter an intelligible sound, and of course he had to stop, for jabbering went for nothing.

Shanks, for he was usually too full of business, but occasionally they did so, and then there was fun alive!

A day or so after that racket on the Old Man the two jokers got one up on Shanks that stripped the shirts off the line.

The manager was in the habit of hanging his hat up in the box-office during the day, when he was selling tickets for the evening's performance, and Shorty and the Kid had got onto it.

One afternoon Shanks came on the stage during a rehearsal, leaving his hat hanging on its peg, and a young man to sell tickets.

The Kid skipped out, and presently returned, whispering a few words to Shorty.

When the rehearsal was nearly over, Shorty said to the manager:

"Wot's der matter with yer, Shanksy? Yer look kind o' funny."

"Me!" said Shanks. "Why, there's nothing at all the matter with me."

"Well, you look pretty bad anyhow," remarked the Kid.

"Shouldn't wonder if yer was going into a decline," added Shorty.

"Yes, and you ought to take something for it, I reckon," said Charlie.

"Yes, but George ought to know. He wouldn't say you were if—"

"George is nothing but a chump," retorted Shanks, getting mad.

"Dat's all right," said Shorty, "but if I had something de matter with me and a friend told me about it, seems ter me I'd do something."

"Ah, Shanksy's got der swell head," muttered the Kid. "Yer can't tell him nothing, 'cause he knows it all, but if I ever seen der signs of paralysis on a feller, he's got—"

"Ah, go soak your head!" sputtered Shanks, leaving the stage.

"Why do you want to tell him that for, George, when you know it isn't so?" asked Josiah.

"It is so, pop. He ain't got no strength at all, I tell you."

"Oh, this is one of your jokes."

"Do yer think I'd joke about a thing like dat?" asked Shanks, indignantly. "I tell yer he can't lift nothing, he can't."

"Course he can't," added Charlie, "and we'll prove it to you."

"Yes, come on," said George, "and if you're wrong, it'll cost you a basket o' something."

"You know I never bet, George."

"Well, come on anyhow, and see for yourself."

"Very well, but I shall be very sorry if anything is really the matter with the poor man."

"Well, come on and see."

The three then proceeded to the box office, where Shanks was looking over a stack of tickets, with an expression on his face sour enough to curdle milk.

"Hallo, Shanksy, feel any better?" asked George.

"Gee! but you do look bad!" added Charlie.

"He doesn't look like himself, that's a fact," murmured Josiah.

Shanks wheeled around on his high stool, glared at the three visitors and snapped:

"You're a nice lot of jokers, you are. Can't you find something better to make fun of than a fellow's health? I didn't suppose you'd go into it, though," scowling at the Old Man.

"Come," said Shorty, "I bet you ain't got strength enough to take your hat off that peg."

"Ah, go on. What are you giving me anyhow?"

"Bet you a bottle of fizz you haven't," pursued Shorty.

"And I'll make it another," put in the Kid.

"Ah, don't give me any guff or I'll fire the lot of you out of here. I'm strong enough for that."

"You daren't take it up."

"You're crawling, Shanksy."

"Put up yer money if yer think we're coddling."

"Yes, show der dust if yer spouse we don't know wot we're talking about."

"If you are not sick, Mr. Shanks, you ought to prove it to us," said Josiah, anxiously.

"Go on," said Shorty. "Bet yer can't take dat hat off der rail der fust try."

"Prove it, Smarty," chuckled the Kid. "Go on, strong man."

"Well, I will prove it," growled Shanks, jumping off the stool.

Then he bounced across the room, grabbed his dicer by the lower part of the brim and gave it a yank.

No good!

The hat stayed there and the manager's fingers came away.

"Yah! wot did we tell yer?"

"Maybe, you'll believe us, now?"

Shanks turned pale, but he looked mad as well. Old Man Burwick was astonished for he had always half believed that George and Charlie were joking.

"I'll show you whether I'm paralyzed or not!" growled Shanks.

Then he grabbed that hat fiercely and gave a terrible tug.

Rip!

This time the hat came off the peg and Shanks sat on the floor rather suddenly.

The whole hat did not come away, however.

A portion of the brim remained on the wall just above the peg.

It was nailed there and that was the reason it stayed.

The Kid had put in the nail while Shanks was on the stage taking in the rehearsal.

The manager's assistant knew all about it, of course, but he said nothing.

"There! haven't I got my hat?" demanded Shanks, getting up.

"You didn't take it off der fust time, though," laughed Shorty.

"And yer haven't got der hull of it now," tittered the Kid.

Shanks looked at the wall and then at the damaged hat.

He took a big tumble and began to laugh.

"All right, Petey!" he said to Shorty, "but that'll cost you the price of a new hat."

"And you a basket of pop, see?"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll set up the wine, but I know who's going to pay for it."

"You are, of course."

"Yes, you think so," laughed Shanks, "but I know how to fix up my expense account so's that basket of fizz'll be there and yet not show," and then they all laughed.

Just about now the Old Man's big joke upon Shorty came off.

Josiah got Charlie to help him, and the Kid had no objections, although he did not often put up jobs upon his dad.

The thing was sure not to miss fire, however, if the Kid took part in it, and maybe that was the reason that the Old Man got him into it.

It all came about in this way.

Shorty used to be a good burlesque stump speech maker in the old times, and he now concluded to put in an act of that sort in order to revive old memories.

The public always cotton to a good thing, no matter how old it is, and so Shorty was sure of getting lots of applause, for he was a rattler at the business.

When the time for his act arrived, an ordinary kitchen scene was shoved on, and the two supers brought in a plain pine table, on which was a bottle and a tumbler.

Then Shorty came in, and all hands began to laugh.

The little runt wore a checked vest with squares on it as big as dollars, a long blue coat, cut swallow-tail, which reached to the floor, and had regular butter plate buttons on it, a pair of striped trousers and a high white hat, and carried a blue cotton umbrella.

Taking his hat off suddenly, the lecturer dropped upon the floor a pack of cards, a ham bone, half a pound of crackers, a towel, a cake of soap, two cigars, a brush and a comb, a mouth organ, a top and cord, a lead sinker and several chestnuts.

"Scuse me, ladies and gen'men, I'se just come in from dinner," he remarked, gathering up the miscellaneous collection and shoving it all back in the hat and placed the latter on the table.

Then he proceeded to take off his gloves which proved to be very long, white cotton stockings, doing this with such an air of gravity that everybody had to laugh.

After this he cleared his throat, took a pull at the bottle and started off:

"Ladies and gen'men, I comes befo' youse dis ebenin' to digest you on the question of de rights ob ebery man to hab a equal share in dish yer earth and enjoy de same privileges dat every other fellow does nevertheless notwithstanding, however, moreover, on the other hand."

Then he banged the table with his umbrella, took another pull at the bottle and resumed:

"As I was saying, the influence of steam railroads and patent bullgines upon the dairy interests in a great country like dis, is not to be considered in de same light as de great preponderosity ob de colored race in de cultivated regions ob de No'th Pole, although, moreover and circumpectly, we may foresee great damage to the water melon crop, while conversely, considering the increase in population, you can't evade the customs laws without some day reaping the benefits thereof, notwithstanding the ratio of ingrowing toe-nails to the increase of crime depends largely upon a proper understanding of the subject. Am I right or am I wrong?"

Another sweep of the umbrella after this quotation and away went hat and all off the table.

"Talking about the Chinese question, some folks would never be satisfied with an equal distribution of land all over de scumfrence ob de earth, de fack is dey wants de hull earth demselves and, settting this point diametrically contiguous to the question previously before stated, that of woman suffrage, I think it behooves us to bring up our chillen to respeck deir elders an' neber talk back to de ole folks, unless de club am los' on de rawhide am down de well, and even den it strikes me dat de wrongs ob de wo'kin' classes in dis country am not at all disproportionate to de merits ob de case, dat is to say, dat when public opinion comes aftah youse like de tide ob de ocean, like a great overflowin' flood ob waters, it am time—"

There was a sudden check to the orator's flow of eloquence.

#### CHAPTER IV.

SHORTY was in the middle of the stage making a stump speech.

He had just reached the point where he described public opinion as like an overwhelming flood of waters when he suddenly stopped.

It was that same overwhelming flood that stopped him.

The Old Man and the Kid, one on each side of the stage, suddenly appeared in the wings, each with a nozzle of a garden hose in his hands.

Shorty gave them the cue and at the mention of the overwhelming flood they let drive.

That was the Old Man's little racket on Shorty.

He got that water right in the neck and on both sides at once.

There was no more stump speech after that.

The table was upset, and so was Shorty, in more ways than one.

He sat down plump on the stage, while the water soured all over him and the audience fairly howled with delight.

The crowd thought it was all in the bill, and they cheered and yelled for more.

The stage manager shoved on a front scene and called for the sweet singer of ballads, while the crowd still yelled.

The Old Man turned off the water, dropped his hose and went away, remarking to himself with a chuckle:

"Well, I don't think I'll go back home just now."

The Kid also went away with his hose, and when Shorty picked himself up and gazed around him, neither of those two jokers was in sight.

"Well, dat's a nice way to treat a feller," he remarked. "Dey knocked dat speech of mine just silly."

Then he went off to get on some dry clothes, meeting the Kid at the door of his dressing-room.

"Hallo, dad," said that little rascal. "Did it make you sweat like dat to get off dat speech?"

"I'll make you sweat!" said Shorty. "Wot yer want ter play roots on me fur like dat? Ain't you and me pardners?"

"Cert, dad."

"Den wot yer want ter go back on me for, I want ter know?"

"Me?" said that innocent Kid.

"Yes, you."

"Wot makes you think I done it?"

"Well, didn't yer?"

"Did you see me, dad?"

"No, I didn't."

"Den what makes you think I was in it?"

"Well, wasn't you?"

"I ain't givin' nuthin' away," chuckled Charlie.

"Well, they was two of you in it anyhow, and I'll bet der Ole Man was one and you was the other."

"Well, go ask grandpop," laughed the Kid. "He'll tell you all about it, I guess."

"All right, young feller," said Shorty; "but you just wait till it's my turn. You'll get drowned, that's wot."

Then he went off, and in passing the Old Man's room heard that ancient individual chuckling to himself.

"Ho, ho! that was the best yet. I don't think I'll go home now. Didn't he get soaked, though? We worked that up first rate, me and Charlie. I don't think George will want to fool with me after this."

"H'm! den it was pop and der Kid wot done me up," muttered Shorty as he went on. "All right for them. Just wait till I get a chance and you'll see what sort of a racket dem duffers will get."

The first one to get even on was the Kid, for that was harder than squaring accounts with the Old Man.

Shorty put on his thinking dicer, and presently evolved something good with its aid.

There was to be a rehearsal the next day, and all hands came to it, the Kid among the rest.

"Are you going to do that stump speech again, George?" asked the Old Man with a chuckle.

The joke was too good for him to keep to himself, and he enjoyed roasting Shorty exceedingly.

"No, I guess not," said Shorty; "but maybe you'd like to do it yourself?"

"No, George, I've got enough to do without that," returned Josiah.

"Yer don't catch the Old Man like that," laughed the Kid. "He's up to snuff, he is."

All the same, that little scamp was thinking how he could work a snap upon his respectable grandfather.

Shorty was laying for the Kid, the latter was ready to soak the Old Man, and Josiah was planning how he could warm both of these jokers at one shot and thus get square on them.

He did not approve of practical jokes, of course, but he wanted to give George and Charlie a lesson for all that.

It made a big difference to him where the jokes came from, you bet.

Well, the rehearsal proceeded, and everybody forgot all about rackets except Shorty.

Presently the Kid walked up the stage to look at some new scenery that had just been run on, it having been painted expressly for this engagement.

It was Shorty who had run on the set, knowing that the Kid would want to see it.

Charlie started up the stage, as I have said, but he only reached the middle thereof when he disappeared.

He had stepped upon an unsupported trap, and down he went.

In another minute he found himself sprawling in a net held by half a dozen stage hands.

He had not fallen far, nor was he allowed to remain long in suspense.

Those six shifters shifted him in a jiffy.

They gave him the bounce, tossed him in a blanket, as it were.

Josiah ran toward the trap as soon as Charlie went down, expecting to hear that the young joker had broken his leg.

No such luck!

Before he reached the trap the Old Man saw Charlie come shooting up through the hole in spread eagle style.

Down he went in another moment, and then in a jiffy he came up again, kicking out like a frog.

"Bless my heart! what does this mean?" the old fellow demanded.

Shorty appeared at the back of the stage and answered:

"It means that that's one on the Kid, pop, and that your turn will come next!"

"Dear me!" gasped the Old Man, as he beat a retreat.

Charlie only got one or two more bouncings after that, and then the net was lowered and the trap returned to its place.

The shifters chuckle the net over Charlie when

they let him down, and then skipped off in half a dozen different directions.

Consequently the Kid could not tell who they were, for by the time he had disentangled himself from the meshes of the net his bouncers had fled.

When he went on the stage again, looking rather sheepish, Shorty said to him:

"Great flight through the air by the Kid, performed only with a net. Big act of yours, that is, Chawles."

" Didn't know you was Spanish before, dad," remarked the Kid.

"How so, Chawles?"

"'Cause you did der cast-a-net act, that's all."

" Do you give maps with them jokes, Chawles?"

"Nobody's going to play any tricks on yer. What are yer scared of?"

Just the same Shorty meant to work up a dandy one on his poor old pop the first chance he got.

The engagement in Philadelphia was drawing to a close, and Shorty determined to make the show better every night, so as to go away in a blaze of glory as it were.

That night, when the curtain arose, the whole company was revealed, the Shortys, Shorty Kids and all, and the first part went off in rattling style.

The best ballads, the funniest comic songs, the newest jokes, the latest thing in jigs, and the finest finale were all crowded into that hour, and the people got their money's worth and no mistake.

Shorty were trying to pose them was something away up, but there was more to come.

The monks were taken, and then the showman skipped out with them, and Josiah was given his cue to go on.

He knew what he had to say, and it was not very much, Shorty gagging his farces to suit himself, and so in he went and announced that he had come to have his picture taken.

Shorty sat him in a chair and took aim at him with his machine, when in popped the Kid, got up as a dude, with a white hat, a young tree for a cane, and a single eyeglass as big as a plate stuck in his right optic.

The Kid couldn't see where he was going, of



The Old Man and the Kid, one on each side of the stage, suddenly appeared in the wings, each with a nozzle of a garden hose in his hands.

"Yes, full directions on each and every bottle. Before taken, to be well shooaken."

"Well, you got the shake that time, anyhow."

"That's all right, dad," said the Kid, "but I didn't think you'd play roots on me."

"Oh, no—of course not," laughed Shorty. "You've got a claim on all der snaps, I suppose? I gotter let you play me for a sucker all you like, but I can't do nothing. Oh, no!"

"Well, we're square then," retorted the Kid with a chuckle.

"Yes, but there's one due on the Old Man yet," thought Shorty to himself.

Josiah evidently had an idea of what Shorty was thinking about, however, for he said crustily:

"I should think you'd had about enough of these practical jokes. Understand that if I see any more of them I shall go straight home to New York."

"You can't go straight unless you fly, dad," chuckled Shorty, "and a fine old carrier-pigeon you'd make, wouldn't yer?"

"More like a big goose," added the Kid. "All der Jerseyites would get their guns when he came along."

"Ah, you needn't be afraid, dad," said Shorty.

Then after the acrobatic act of the Shorty Kids, a song and dance by six comedians and a banjo exercise by four exponents of the art of banjo playing, there came the time-honored fake of "The Photograph Gallery" by the Shortys, assisted by several members of the company.

Shorty was the photographer, Josiah was the countryman, by general request and for this occasion only, the Kid was a dude and the three boys were three monkeys just escaped from the museum over the way.

The Old Man hated farces when he had to take part in them, and always wanted to be let off after the drawing-room part of the show.

Shorty persuaded him that the people wanted to see him, and insisted that the farce would not go at all if he were not in it.

Josiah, therefore, agreed to play the part of a countryman who comes to have his picture taken, Shorty assuring him that he would have very little to do.

Well, the thing opened with Shorty waiting for business, and being visited by a showman who wanted his three monkeys photographed.

The fun those kids made while the showman and

course, and he fell against the Old Man's chair and sent him sprawling.

Josiah began to growl, but George whispered that it was all right and to go on with the piece.

Mr. Burwick had scarcely seated himself when in bounced those three apes, each by a different door, and made a rush for him.

He had not seen the boys in their monkey make-ups and he thought that three real baboons were after him.

Over he went and the chair was smashed to bits while the monkeys went tumbling and capering about the stage in the liveliest fashion.

Josiah was mad and frightened too, and he determined to get out of that without more ado.

He started for the center door, when in came a German band to get its photograph taken.

Josiah collided with the bass drum, and he and the drummer were both upset, the drum itself rolling down to the footlights.

Instantly young Cal did a balancing act on it, not in the bill, and got a round of applause.

He dusted as soon as that mad Old Man got up, however, and he, Pete and Ed skipped out.

Josiah was about to attempt flight a second

time, when the Kid whispered that the thing was not yet over, and that he must keep up the fun.

"Fun be blowed!" gasped the Old Man. "You're making a regular fool of me, and I won't stand it any longer."

The crowd in the house did not hear him, however, and they thought this was the funniest thing yet.

It was not much fun to Mr. Burwick, although the Kid and Shorty were having lots of it.

"Dis is my fader, boss," said Charlie, "and we wants our pictur took, wif the brass band ahind us."

"Oh, dat's yo' fader, h'm?" asked Shorty, putting on a huge pair of spectacles.

"Yas'r, dat's my fader," answered the Kid, with a giggle.

"Wall, he am bettah lookin' dan yo' is, an' he ain' so much ob a dood," said Shorty, and the crowd howled.

"How much more of this infernal nonsense is there?" growled Josiah. "I'm sick and tired of it."

"Only a little more, grandpop," said the Kid. "Come on; don't be too breezy. It won't hurt you."

"Does yo' wan' de brass ban' behin' yo', son?" asked Shorty.

"Yas'r; an' I wan' de tune dat dey play put inter de pictur besides."

"G'way, chile! how yo' 'spect I kin fotygrab a tune? H'm!"

"Ca'se you kin, an' I wan' it too, else I don't get my pictur taken."

"A'right, son, yo' jes' put yo'se'f in a nice group an' I do de res' ob it."

The Old Man was put in a chair, the Kid stood behind him, and the musicians grouped themselves behind him.

Then Shorty rolled his camera up quite close and went off to get his plate, as he said.

That was only to give the boys their cue, and also to give the stage manager his, and then he came back and proceeded to take his group.

He got under the black cloth, waved his arms frantically and touched a bell.

In came the three monkeys and perched themselves on the Old Man's chair, while at the same time, a puff of white shot out from the muzzle of the camera.

That was flour and Shorty had shot it out with a big gun he had, right in the Old Man's face.

The scene was closed in on this sudden change from black to white and the audience just yelled.

The stage was cleared in a second and it took Josiah somewhat longer than that to recover himself.

He was mad and no mistake and threatened to go home at once.

"Dat's most as funny as squirtin' a hose plump in a feller's face, ain't it, pop?" chuckled Shorty, from the wing.

"You might have blinded me!" sputtered Josiah. "Why didn't you tell me what was coming?"

"Spoil half the fun, pop," chuckled Shorty. "You never told me you was going to turn on the water."

"That was different," sputtered Josiah, as he went off to his room, pretending to be digging the flour out of his eyes.

"Dat's a good one on pop," muttered Shorty, "and I don't think he'll want ter go home neither."

In fact, Josiah never mentioned the subject, although he made Ginger stand around in lively fashion when that coon came in to fix him up.

"Neber see Marse Burwick so cross afo'!" muttered the nig. "I specs dem boys, Marse Go'ge an' Marse Charlie, done been playin' tricks on de ole ge'man. I wouldn't stan' it if I was him, but dat am no reason why he gotter gib me fits."

"Serves me just right for trying to get even on those boys," the Old Man said to himself afterwards. "It just encourages them worse than ever."

"I said I wasn't going to have any practical jokes, and I ought to have stuck to it, and just gone home at the very first symptoms, but I didn't."

"No, I had to go and think I could play off a trick on George, and I did, and it was a good one, too, but, ha! what's the use? It only makes George more anxious to get one off on me."

"I was a big fool, that's what I was, but I won't stand any more nonsense. No, sir, and if those boys try any more of their pranks I'll just go home the first thing."

It was all very well to say that, but Shorty could not stop his pranks any more than a bird could help flying.

Moreover, Shorty would get up gags on the Old Man as long as he lived, and Josiah could not help himself, and the more he tried to get even the worse it would be for him.

However, he gave his dad a rest for a day or so,

as the show was about to pull up stumps from Philadelphia and go elsewhere.

They finished up on Saturday night with a first-class programme, and on Monday took the train for Pittsburg, where they opened on Monday night to a big house.

The next morning, as Shorty was standing in front of the theater, having had business there, a smart-looking chap, rather loudly dressed and wearing a good deal of showy jewelry, came along, stopped and said:

"I say, you're the boss of this show, ain't you?"

"Cert," said Shorty, who had no mock modesty about him.

"Well, I say, you give a pretty funny show, but I can give you points."

"Kin yer?" asked Shorty.

"Why, yes, I'm a funny fellow myself."

"Oh, you are, eh?"

"Yes, I am, and I'd like to travel with your show. Me and you ought to work it up to a good pitch."

There was nothing modest or retiring about this young man, either, when you came to size him up.

"Oh, you think you and me could make a pretty good show, do yer?" asked Shorty, never letting on that he was guying the young man with the noisy clothes.

"I'm sure of it. You want to see what I can do. I'm just a la-la, I am. All the companies wanted me for this season, but I ain't giving away any talent, see?"

"No, I wouldn't if I was you."

"Of course not, I wouldn't go with any jay shows. I wouldn't, but you've got a good one, you have—that is, it could be made good if I was in it."

Shorty admired the fellow's cheek, but still he kept mum.

"I'm looking for a good man," he remarked. "How would you like to come with us?"

"Well, my terms ain't the kind that ten cent show managers can touch, you understand?"

"Certainly."

"I come high and if you must have me you've got to pay my figure, see?"

"Suppose you show me wot yer kin do," suggested Shorty. "I can't engage a feller unless I know what he is, you know."

"Oh, you'll find me a la-la, I tell you," said that young man with the hard cheek.

"Of course," muttered Shorty, "but I want ter see for myself. Come on."

Then he led the way to the stage with a twinkle in his eye that meant a good deal, if not more.

## CHAPTER V.

SHORTY led the way to the stage, followed by the loud young man who thought himself a la-la, and who was anxious to give a specimen of his abilities.

That little runt intended to put the aspirant for histrionichonors through a course of training which would make him forever sick of the stage and all that pertained thereto.

In case the young man showed any talent, he would be spared, but Shorty was pretty good at sizing up people, and he was willing to bet that the loud young man was only a ham and nothing more.

Leading the way to the stage, Shorty told the young fellow with the stunning clothes to wait a moment while he went and got the orchestra and two or three of the company to assist in the rehearsals.

He found the leader of the band, but all the others that he picked up were stage hands, door keepers and such.

The leader and three of these fellows, who had been given their points, went into the orchestra pit, the stage was lighted and the show began.

"Now, then, give us a sample," said Shorty, from a seat in a proscenium box.

The man with the dizzy raiment and the superabundant jewelry took the stage.

"This is a song and dance," he remarked.

"You can catch the tune in a minute."

Shorty had heard some pretty rocky singing in his day, but the specimen that he now was obliged to hear was the rockiest that he had ever listened to.

In fact, that ambitious young comedian was strictly no good.

His singing was bad, but his dancing was worse.

"Give us knock-about business," said Shorty to the young man, giving one of the scene shifters a wink.

The man left the stage, and the debutant said:

"Well, I've got to have a partner for that. Got any good knock-about fellows in your company?"

"Cert, I have. Jimmy, give the gent a lift."

Jimmy was a big fellow, weighing over one hundred and sixty pounds, and was a hustler besides.

"Give us some music," said Shorty, and there was a terrible racket in the orchestra.

"Take the stage," said George. "Now, then, Jimmy."

Jimmy immediately lifted the young fellow off his feet and stood him on his head.

The orchestra made a lot more noise, and the amateur got up, looking very red in the face.

"That ain't right," he said. "You want to give me a chance."

"All right," said Jimmy. "You go for me now," and he stamped his foot and stepped back.

The young fellow went for him, but before he got there fell through a trap upon a feather bed placed beneath.

Jimmy's stamp had been the signal for the trap to be opened.

"Ouch!" yelled the loud young man as he landed on his back.

He was immediately seized and placed on the platform of a star trap and suddenly shot up through the stage.

He appeared to the sound of a crash of drums and cymbals, in the manner of the harlequin in a pantomime.

Unlike that spangled gentleman, however, he came down on his seat with less dignity than force, and gave a grunt.

Then two scene shifters, one on each side, grabbed the two halves of a flat and ran them on.

That fresh young man was just getting up, when he was caught between the two flats and pinned there.

"Wow—ow—ouch! Let me out!" he howled.

"Dat's fust rate!" cried Shorty. "Dat's der funniest thing I seen yet. You'll be worth about two dollars a week to this show."

"Let me out of this, I tell you!" bawled the novice, struggling to free himself.

Then Shorty gave the shifters the tip, and they removed those flats so hurriedly that the other flat fell slap on the stage.

Jimmy immediately grabbed him by the seat of his checked trousers, and lifted him up with the ease of an old cat toting one of her kittens.

A fellow up in the flies suddenly let down a rope with a hook on it, Jimmy slipped the hook into the hamfatter's waistband, and then up he went right into the regions above.

When he got there two other fellows grabbed him and sent him sliding down the steep and dusty stairs leading to the stage.

By the time he had made his way among flats and furniture, wings, set cottages, throne steps and practical wells to the open stage and footlights, there wasn't a soul in sight.

Moreover, the lights were out, and only a glimmer of day from the parquet doors could be seen.

"You're all a lot of stuffs," said the angry aspirant, as he brushed the dust off of his demonstrative trousers.

Nobody denied the soft impeachment, and not a sound was heard.

"I'll lick any one of you, or all of you put together," continued the stage-struck comedian, as he advanced clear to the footlights.

There wasn't any one to lick, and the challenge was repeated to the empty air.

"Play me for a sucker, will you? Well, you're all jealous of me, that's what's the matter. I can lay clean over any man you've got in the show, and you know it. You fellows don't know what good talent is, you don't."

Nobody denied this, and not a soul appeared, and at last, getting tired of talking to an empty house, the loud young man went down the steps into the orchestra and began groping his way toward the front of the house.

Then a door was opened, and a man came in.

"Here, you, get out of here!" he growled. "There ain't no show here now, don't you know that? What do you want here, anyhow? Trying to steal some of our scenery, are you? Well, you just better get out. Here, Mike!"

Mike was a sweeper, and he and the other man grabbed that funny minstrel boy and shoved him into the street in short order.

This was all very funny to Shorty and the rest, but that was not the end of it.

That rising young professional, who thought himself such a fine actor, was mad, chagrined and everything else.

He knew well enough now that he had been made a guy of, and he made up his mind to get hunk on Shorty for it.

George had been alone in this business and neither Charlie nor Josiah knew anything about it.

Of course, he meant to tell the Kid about it, but before he could do so something happened.

That mad young man left the theater in a rage, meditating revenge.

He had not gone more than a couple of squares before he saw a very short, smooth-faced old man approaching.

This was Josiah, as you may have guessed, and he was out for his morning walk.

"There's that runt now!" exclaimed the embryo

Thespian. "He thinks I went the other way. I'll fix him, I will."

Poor Josiah was once more mistaken for his bad boy George.

Before he knew where he was or what was the matter his hat was sent flying into the gutter by that mad actor's fist.

"I'll fix you, confound you, just see if I don't!" cried the man in the gorgeous clothes.

He was muscular, he was, and he grabbed Josiah up, held him at arms' length and began to shake him for all he knew.

"Play me for a sucker, will you, you little sawed-off?"

Shake!

Josiah did not see the joke, however, and was now red in the face with indignation, the unusual exercise and surprise.

However, his time of deliverance was at hand.

Shorty had just met the Kid on the other side of the way and was about to tell him of that latest racket.

Just then they both saw the crowd opposite and wondered what it was all about.

"Let's go and see," they both remarked in a breath.

Ginger Jones was also out for a walk, for it was his custom to keep not far away when his master took his strolls, so as to be ready in case anything happened.

the crowd separated to allow those three fellows to get their legs and arms out of the tangle.

The loud young man with the sample jewelry shop was the first to get out of the muddle.

As he arose his eyes lighted upon Shorty.

Then he realized the mistake he had made.

"Oh, you're the one, are you?" he asked.

Then he made a pass at the little runt, expecting to wipe up the walk with him.

The Kid suspected as much, ran between his legs and sent him sprawling.

Then he and George ran to the assistance of Ginger, whom the Old Man was now kicking and pounding, jabbering away like a monkey the whole time.



"Play me for a sucker, will you, you little sawed-off?" Shake! "Put me through a course of sprouts again, you undersized runt, will you?" More shakings. Poor Josiah could not speak, he was so astonished. More than that, the loud young man had fairly shaken the false teeth out of his mouth. Without their aid the Old Man could not utter one coherent word.

"Put me through a course of sprouts again, you undersized runt, will you?"

More shakings.

"Think it mighty funny to make a guy of me, you half-grown chump, do you?"

Another shake and a good one.

Poor Josiah could not speak, he was so astonished.

More than that, the loud young man had fairly shaken the false teeth out of his mouth.

Without their aid the Old Man could not utter one coherent word.

He could only jabber and look indignant.

The man with the noisy suit and the big watch chain had his hand in now, and evidently meant to keep it there.

"I'll show you whether I am a good card or not for your old show."

What a shaking Josiah did get!

"Don't you look black and jabber at me, you homely old midget! Make a sucker of me, will you? Well, I guess not."

There were plenty of people looking on now and they all thought the thing was very funny.

They laughed and chuckled and took on at a great rate.

That coon had stopped to flirt with a colored nursery maid, however, and that's how he had not seen the first of the fracas.

He saw the crowd now, however, suspected that Mr. Burwick was in trouble and put on a spurt.

When he beheld that poor Old Man in the air, above the people's head, sputtering and struggling, he was just boiling.

Regardless of consequences, he dashed forward, broke through the crowd, lowered his head and went for the loud young man full tilt.

The latter got it in the stomach and doubled up like a loose-jointed knife in half a shake.

That was not all that happened either.

Ginger's shiny high dicer was made into a crush hat in a jiffy, and that coon's full moon face was eclipsed.

The loud young man dropped Josiah in a twinkling, and that respectable old party straddled Ginger's neck.

Down went Mr. Jones, down went Josiah, and down went the loud young man also.

At this point Shorty and the Kid arrived at the seat of war.

There was a great laughing and giggling, and

Shorty got onto the whole business in a twinkling.

"Ho, dat's funny," he chuckled. "Dat bad actor took der Ole Man fur me and gave him a laying out. Well, if that ain't good."

Between them the two little runts lifted Josiah off of Ginger, the loud young man went his way unrejoicing, and Ginger struggled to his feet and dug himself out of his hat.

Josiah went on jabbering and Ginger knowing the cause, looked around for those store teeth.

He found them lying in the gutter and clapped them in the old man's mouth, without first taking the trouble to wipe them off.

"Nice fellow, you are, to look after me," sputtered Josiah. "Let anybody murder me, you would, and never—ugh, spt-spt! Gosh blast it, what have you done with those—ugh!"

He fairly spit out his crockery masticators, and while he was wiping them and his mouth George and Charlie evaporated.

Ginger found his master's hat and got a fine tongue-lashing besides, the Old Man calling him all the stupid donkeys and fat-headed chumps he could think of.

Mr. Ginger Jones felt very unhappy, and if he

had dared would have taken a round out of Josiah, but then that would have lost him his place, and that was not what he was looking for.

Shorty told the Kid all about the racket on the would-be minstrel star, and the two jokers had lots of fun over it.

"And o' course grandpop had to come along just when that chump was looking for blood," chuckled the Kid. "Beats everything, that old duffer's luck does."

"Regular Jonah to himself, that old chump is," laughed Shorty, "and that's where the fun comes in."

"If we'd tried, we couldn't ha' worked up a better snap on him."

"Cert'nly not, we couldn't, and them kind o' snaps is the best after all."

"Yes, and grandpop can't blame us for 'em neither."

The Old Man went back to the hotel very mad, and began to talk about packing up, going home, and all that.

"What's the matter now?" asked Angie. "Have George and Charlie been playing any more of their tricks? It's just a shame, that's what it is."

"Oh, it's something George did to a young fellow with a lot of cheap jewelry, and he took me for George and gave me—I declare, I won't stand it!"

"Won't stand being taken for George? Well, I'm sure nobody but a fool would do that."

"Well, I'm not going to be at the mercy of every fool," snapped Josiah. "I'm going home, and you can get yourself and California ready just as soon as you can."

Mrs. Josiah did not like this, for she wanted to see more of the country.

"I don't see what you want to go home for now," she remarked. "You say yourself it wasn't George's fault."

"Well, then, he's got to stop his everlasting fooling," retorted Mr. Burwick, with considerable vigor. "I told him I wouldn't go with him if he didn't, and he keeps it up right along."

"But he wasn't playing any tricks on you," said Angie, mildly.

"I can't help it if he wasn't. I got it all the same," snorted Josiah, and he began rummaging through his trunks, as mad as blazes.

Angie let him rummage, while she went out for a drive, taking Cal and his cousins, or whatever else you could call them, with her.

The Old Man did not return to New York, for he could not do all the packing alone, nor could he find Ginger to assist him, that wise coon keeping out of the way for fear of another jawing, and perhaps something worse.

If Ginger escaped the Old Man, he did not get away from the three boys, however.

When they returned from their drive they saw him, dressed up in his dandiest, just starting out for a walk.

They soon got on his track, and Pete suggested having a lark with him.

"We'll rattle him," laughed Cal. "Pop is busy and Ginger won't to see want him either, I guess, and so there's no danger of his blabbing on us."

"Doesn't he look to me?" remarked Ed. "He thinks he's the dandiest coon in town, he does."

Ginger was promenading the street with the air of a masher, a tall hat on his head, a cane in his hand, a big red flower stuck in the button-hole of his wide-wale cutaway coat, his light trousers a world too wide, and his white waistcoat fairly covered with watch chain and seals.

The boys were not very far behind him, but he did not observe them, his attention being taken up with mashing.

Presently, when they reached a part of the street which was less crowded than the rest, they met a big Dutch policeman, who walked along with the air of a man who owns half the earth and has a first mortgage on the other half.

"Say, officer," said Cal, "do you see that dandy coon that you just passed?"

"Yaw, I seen him once. What was der metter mit him?"

"He's an escaped convict, and if you take him in you'll get a reward of a thousand dollars."

"So?" said the Dutchman. "I dinks I vas got a crip on dot money already once."

Then he wheeled around and hurried after the coon.

Ginger was swinging his stick without regard to any one but himself, and as the Dutchman hurried up he caught it right in the ribs.

It doubled him up, and the stick was knocked flying.

"Ach, himmel!" muttered the Dutchman, with a grunt. "Vot you vas trying to do, ain't it?"

"Who yo' mean by knockin' dat cane out o' my han', yo' big loafah?" demanded Ginger, angrily.

"Nefer you mind telling me dose riddles," said the Dutchman. "You was my prisoner once already, and maybe it was more better you come

mit me once before I clubs dat head off you, ain't it?"

"What yo' want me fo?" demanded Ginger, beginning to tremble. "I hain't done nuffin to be took up fur."

"Don't gife me some more shin moosic once off you don't want me to broke your head. Shust you come mit me, and don't say noding about dat. I knows my duty, I bats you."

"Won' yo' wait till I gets my stick?" asked Ginger, as the cop laid one big hand on his shoulder.

"Nein, you don't was want a cane in dot chail once," retorted the copper.

Ginger had no notion of going to jail, however.

He had expected to make his escape by strategy, but as that door was closed, he looked around for another.

If strategy would not avail, force might.

Not caring to risk another hat in butting, that wily coon suddenly lifted one of his big feet and planted it right in the Dutchman's stomach.

Down went that copper on the sidewalk, and Ginger took to his heels.

The officer gave a yell, however, jumped to his feet, and gave chase.

It began to look now as if that coon would not get away so easily after all.

## CHAPTER VI.

DOWN the street went that dandy coon, Ginger Jones, at full speed, pursued by that big fat Dutch policeman.

The Shorty Kids followed close behind, for they wanted to see the fun as well as the next fellow.

Cal picked up the nobby cane which Ginger had dropped, and it was just as well that he did.

That Dutch policeman was fat, but he could run, and that's just what he did do.

Moreover, Mr. Ginger Jones in his haste did not look where he was going, and the first thing he knew, he ran plump into a man coming towards him.

Down he went on the walk, and when he got up the Dutch copper was nearly on top of him.

Here's where Cal and the cane came upon the scene.

The Old Man's hopeful, being fleet of foot, had followed that copper pretty close and was now about up with him.

Seeing Ginger's danger, the young scamp thrust the cane between the fat legs of the Dutchman, and gave it a turn.

That was something the man had not expected.

He was tripped up as fine as you please, and went down as solid as a house.

It behooved the boys to stir their stumps after that, however.

Ginger heard a thump, turned and saw the copper sprawling on the walk, let out a horse laugh, and scooted off as fast as his rather rheumatic limbs would allow.

The Dutchman did not catch him, and the boys got away also, leaving a very mad policeman glaring after them.

"Wait till I catch dem boys once," he remarked, as he shook his fist at the runaways. "Der whole beesness was a skin, once, und I don't believ me dot black mans was a escaped confict at all, already."

There were others waiting to give Ginger the razzle dazzle, and if he had known about it he would not have gone back to the hotel at all.

Mr. Burwick, on account of his hearty exercise of that morning, did not feel particularly well that evening, and when the first part was over began to get ready to go home and to bed.

That shaking up he had received was too much for him, and he felt like a rest.

He called Ginger, but there was no Ginger to be found.

There was a very good reason for this, which I will explain.

Shorty and the Kid had thought up a dandy racket on that coon.

Just after the first part was over and the curtain was down, somebody called Ginger.

He started for the stage, thinking it was Mr. Burwick.

As he was going across it, he was suddenly grabbed, a belt was thrown around him, just under his arms, and then he was suddenly hoisted up in the air.

He did not stop until he was just under the borders in the first entrance, that is, behind the curtain and in front of any scenes that might be run across.

When the curtain was rung up again, there he was, up in the air, in plain sight of the audience, yelling and kicking for all he was worth.

A coon in full dress, hanging up there like a spider, just overhead, was something to make anybody laugh, and the audience howled, while at the same time they wondered what he was there for.

A song and dance team came out and did a turu,

paying no attention, however, to the coon overhead.

Then there was a lot of operatic business by the female impersonator, and still no reference was made to poor Ginger up in the air.

A farce followed, the scenes being changed several times, and through the whole business Mr. Jones was in a state of suspense.

He couldn't fall, being held by a broad, strong belt, but he could not get down either, and whenever any one came on the stage, he would howl to be let down.

At last a front scene representing a gorgeous drawing-room was shoved on, and in came Shorty and the Kid in full evening dress to sing a topical song.

"Hi-hi, Mistah Go'ge, Marse Charlie, lemme down out o' dis," yelled Ginger.

Shorty paid no attention to the nig but advanced to the footlights and rattled off these lines to a lively air:

"When a man cannot tell what he's going to do,  
He's in suspense, he's in suspense,  
When all his affairs are just in a stew,  
He's in suspense, he's in suspense;  
When things go dead wrong, and to fix 'em he tries,  
And gets into confusion clean up to his eyes,  
It's easy to tell, though I'm not very wise,  
That he certainly is in suspense."

This catch line seemed very appropriate, considering the state of suspense poor Ginger was in overhead.

Having finished the first verse, Shorty sang the chorus, being joined by the Kid:

"He's in suspense, he's in suspense,  
He's in a stew, don't know what to do;  
Though wise he may be, he's just like a baby,  
He's in suspense, he's in suspense."

Neither of those jolly jokers looked up or seemed to know that Ginger was up there in the clouds, and so every time they said "He's in suspense" the whole house was convulsed.

Well, there was a second verse to that ballad, and the Kid now unwound it.

"When your boodle's in the bank and the cashier skips out,

You're in suspense, quite in suspense;  
When at the club you stay too late, and your wife's on the scout,

You're in suspense, you're in suspense.  
When you go to see your Sunday girl and press your little suit,  
Not knowing if she may prefer some other fresh galoot,

Or whether you'll go spinning at the toe of dad's big boot,

You're in suspense, you're in suspense."

This brought out more cheers and laughter, and then Shorty joined the Kid in the chorus.

"He's in suspense, he's in suspense,  
No fun he's had, it's quite too bad,  
Though he may sigh, to get down try,  
He's in suspense, he's in suspense."

There they were, those two scamps, smiling, gesticulating and saying "He's in suspense," and yet paying not the slightest attention to the poor coon in suspense over their head.

They sang another verse with the same refrain and then skipped out, poor Ginger yelling in vain for them to come and let him down.

The old man had long ago gone home, after waiting in vain for his valet, and so he knew nothing about the little racket.

He called Ginger all sorts of things in his absence and declared that he would fire the lazy coon the next day and there hung the poor moko unable to help himself and yet being considered a part of the show.

George and Charlie were called back, not by Ginger, but by the audience, and had to sing four or five more verses, the crowd singing the choruses with them and laughing to split themselves over Ginger's sad predicament.

That was not all of it, either.

Ginger Jones remained up there under the borders till the curtain went down for the last time.

None of the performers seemed to notice him and after a time the people in the house evidently thought that he was only a dummy coon and they forg to look at him, particularly as he gradually subsided and did not make any more noise.

When the curtain went down he was out of sight, and the house began to empty rapidly.

"Hallo, dere, you fellahs down dare, wha' de mattah wif youse?" he yelled. "Lemme down out ob dis."

"Who's making all that noise up there?" demanded the janitor of the house.

"It's me, boss, lemme down out o' dis," yelled Ginger.

"Hallo! there's a niggah up there," cried one of the stage hands, beginning to put out the lights.

"'Co'se dey is. Dis de fus' time yo' fin' dat out?" answered that disgusted coon. "I'se been yellin' all evenin' to be taken down."

"Make that coon come down and then fire him out," muttered the stage carpenter.

They were very innocent, those fellows, and you would have supposed by their talk that this was the first they had known of the poor coon being up there.

The stage hands hauled him up and let him down half a dozen times, and finally, when he was not quite so breezy with his chin, let him down for good.

His trip to the top had not been a pleasant one by any means.

at the time, enjoying a smoke and telling a select company of their friends all about that little racket on the coon.

Ginger went home alone and turned in, feeling that life was very dreary to him, especially when he was obliged to travel with a minstrel troupe,



There they were, those two scamps, smiling, gesticulating and saying "He's in suspense," and yet paying not the slightest attention to the poor coon in suspense over their head.

They sang another verse with the same refrain and then skipped out, poor Ginger yelling in vain for them to come and let him down.

They unhitched the rope, which had been carried to the flies, and let Ginger down so suddenly that he thought he was going to be smashed into bits.

He gave a yell as if he thought his last moment was due, and then they went easy on that rope and let him down more gently.

Then they were about to release him, but he got huffy and threatened to lick them all as soon as he had a chance.

"Oh, that's how you feel, is it?" said one of the crowd, with a laugh. "Haul away, Tom."

Ginger was yanked off his feet and danced on nothing in a jiffy.

"Lemme down agin, yo' fellahs!" he demanded.

He was hot, tired, cross, covered with smoke and dust, and looked as if he had been crawling through gas pipes.

They let him go, and then he went about trying to find Shorty, the Old Man, the Kid or even the boys so as to make a complaint against the stage hands.

The Old Man was snug in bed at that time, and did not know anything about the matter and Shorty and the Kid had left the theater.

That luckless coon had no one to listen to his tale of woe and he went away feeling very sad and lonely.

George and Charlie were in a neighboring hotel

and he made up his mind that the sooner his boss got sick of the whole business and made tracks for New York, the better he would be pleased.

That song, "He's in Suspense," was a great go in Pittsburg, and Shorty and the Kid sang it every night after that, but not with the coon swinging over their heads, as upon the night of its first introduction.

The show itself was a great go also in the natural gas city, and Shorty was sure of a good full week and longer if he had cared to stop.

Mr. Burwick had forgotten all about having to go home without Ginger the next day, and that coon escaped a scolding, which was all right, for

in the event of his getting it he would probably have told all about his being strung up all the evening, and then the Old Man would have made a great kick.

"Pop," said Shorty, a day or so later, "we want you for the farce to-night."

Now Josiah had played in too many farces, and he was not going to be put in any more of them.

There seemed to be a fatality connected with farces and every time he played in one something unpleasant happened.

"I won't play in your old farce," he snapped. "You'll play some trick on me if I do."

"Oh, pop, we never play tricks," said Shorty, seriously.

"Course we don't," added the Kid. "We're good boys, we is."

"How about that photograph gallery farce?" asked the Old Man, with considerable vim.

"Well, what about it?"

"Didn't you blow flour in my face and nearly blind me?"

Josiah had a pretty good memory sometimes, it appeared.

"Why, dat was in it, pop," said Shorty, soberly. "You had a right to keep your eyes shut."

"Course you had," supplemented Charlie. "Any fool but you would ha' done it."

"Well, I don't play in any more farces," asserted Mr. Burwick, positively.

He would have been wise if he had stuck to that decision.

"Ah, go on, you old Jonah," sneered Shorty. "What yer scared o'. Yer know very well the folks like to see yer, and you've got lots o' friends in Pittsburg."

"Yes, and they feel sorry to see me in this business," answered the Old Man, shortly.

"Ah, go on," snorted the Kid.

"All right, then, don't play in it," said Shorty, pretending to get mad. "Make Shanks get out a lot of expensive printing, bill you big, spend a heap o' money on you and then go back on him. It's all right, you can do as you like, of course, but it's rough on Shanks."

That settled it.

Mr. Burwick liked Shanks, because the latter never worked off snaps on him, and because he always treated him with the utmost respect.

Therefore, when Shorty accused him of not caring if Shanks lost money or not, he was greatly touched and felt guilty of having done something mean.

Shorty turned to go away, the scene being the hotel, and the Kid joined him.

Then Josiah relented and called them back.

"Hold on, George," he said. "You didn't tell me that about Shanks before."

"Well, I didn't think you was going to be so cranky."

"Well, I'll play in your farce if I don't have much to say."

"I thought you would," said Charlie.

"Yes, I'll play, but there mustn't be any funny business."

"Ah, yer make me tired, always suspecting somebody," said Shorty.

"If them Kids plays any roots on yer, we'll warm 'em," said Charlie, "particularly that Cal of yours."

That was a point upon which the Old Man was the most cranky.

"California is a good boy," he sniffed. "It is your boys, Peter and Edward, who teach him bad habits."

Shorty and the Kid both snickered, but they did not continue the subject, knowing that if they did Josiah would get rattled and back out of the farce business altogether.

You remember that old negro sketch of "School," I suppose?

Of course you do, with Patsey Bolivar, the dunce, the old schoolmaster and all that.

That was the one they were going to do, with Shorty as Patsey Bolivar, the Kid as Hambone Misfits, the good boy, and the bass soloist as Dr. Thrashem, the schoolmaster.

The Old Man wanted a part where he would not have to say much, you will remember.

He was given the character of the Dunce, and had to stand on a stool with a big white cap on his head.

Shorty always played those old sketches to suit himself, and put in a lot of new business not in the book.

At first the Old Man objected to playing the Dunce, but when Shorty told him that it was only a thinking part, and that he would not be obliged to say anything, he withdrew his objections.

All the same, he ought to have known better.

The first scene in the farce was a front one, representing a street with the boys and girls going to school, and here was introduced a lot of the old-time minstrel business, which everybody still likes.

The boys and girls did a song and dance, played

snares on each other, turned flip flaps, and were presently summoned to the school-room by the ringing of a big bell.

In the second scene, which was the school-room, the master was discovered at his desk, the boys were all in their seats, the Dunce was on his stool, and all hands were busy learning their lessons.

The Kid, as the good boy, in a big, ruffled collar, short, white breeches and lace frills, sat beside the master, who now called up the first class.

Just then in came Patsey Bolivar, the butt of the whole school.

"Who discovered Ireland?" asked the master.

"Patsey Bolivar!" yelled the entire mob.

"You are late again, sir," said the pedagogue, in his deepest voice.

"Yas'r, but I got a 'scuse," said Shorty, taking an envelope two feet square from under his arm.

"What's your excuse this morning?"

"Slippery."

"Oh, it was, eh?"

"Yas'r, an' eve'y step I took frontways, I slipped two hindways."

"Then how did you get here at all?"

"Caught a ride on a sleigh. He, he, thought I was going to get off dat ole gag, didn't you?"

"Take a seat, sir, and stop your noise."

"Can't take a seat."

"Why not?"

"Cause dey're all screwed down to de floor."

"Well, then, sit down."

"Why didn't you say so?" and Shorty grinned and sat down.

"Teacher!" suddenly yelled the good boy, jumping up.

"Well, what is it?"

"Patsey Bolivar am eatin' apples."

Shorty was on one side of the stage, the Kid was on the other, and the Old Man was in the middle.

"Just yo' min' yo' own business," muttered Shorty. "Tattle-tale, bob tail, ride him on a rail, tattle-tale."

"Teacher, make him stop," cried the Kid, beginning to cry.

"Come out here, Patsey," said the schoolmaster, and Shorty stepped out.

The teacher laid him across a bench and banged on the back door of his baggy breeches with a board.

Bang!

There was a big torpedo there and it went off with a terrible racket.

Then Shorty went back to his seat, crying and holding on to his stern, while the good boy began to laugh.

"I'll fix you fo' dat," muttered Shorty, sitting down.

He took a big red flannel tomato out of his desk and hurled it at the Kid.

The Old Man's dunce cap was sent flying.

"Teacher, he's firing things!" yelled the good boy, answering the shot with a big fat sponge.

This took the Old Man in the back of the neck.

As it happened to be full of water you can imagine the result.

Shorty jumped up, ran to the fireplace and pulled out a lot of stuffed bricks.

With these he began to bombard the Kid, the latter retorting with bottles, cannon balls, potatoes, apples and tomato cans.

That is to say the real articles were not used, but only theatrical properties made to resemble the same.

Well, there was something funny about the way that those two jokers took aim at each other.

The Old Man got every shot, and they came thick and fast.

Then the school-master hammered on his desk to enforce silence, and Shorty took him on the head with a brick.

The Old Man tried to dodge those many missiles, but could not, and the shower continued.

"Hold on!" he yelled. "I thought you weren't going to do any funny business."

He might have known better.

Just then Shorty fired a big, fat, rubber foot-ball, which looked like a cannon-ball, plumb at his head.

That settled it, and the Old Man gave one howl, jumped off the stool and dusted.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE old-time minstrel farce of "The School in an Uproar," ended in one, for a fact, so far as the Old Man was concerned.

He thought that Shorty was going to throw a sure-enough cannon ball at him, and the way he took to his heels was a caution.

Of course the rest of the fellows all howled, and the scene was closed in with all hands dancing a jig.

Josiah never looked behind him, or he might have seen that big football strike the floor and bounce up.

"I won't submit to any more of their jokes," he

sputtered, when he reached his dressing room. "Why, I might have been killed if that thing had struck me."

Ginger Jones presently reported that the thing was not a cannon ball after all, and then the Old Man was madder than ever.

"I just declare! I won't stand any more of this nonsense," he growled. "It's getting worse and worse every day."

"Yo' didn't get hurt, did yo', boss?" asked Ginger.

"Yes, I did, and don't you dare to call me 'boss,' you stupid blockhead. I won't have it. Do you understand?"

"Yas, b——yas'r, I reckon I do," stammered the coon.

"Then see that you remember it, you worthless old nigger. I won't have anybody calling me 'boss,' if I can help it, and just you remember that."

"Wow! de ole ge'man am on him ear an' no mistook!" muttered Mr. Ginger Jones to himself when he got away.

"That's just the last practical joke I'm going to stand," continued the Old Man, as he prepared to leave the theater. "The idea of George throwing that thing at me! Why, it was enough to scare me to death."

"I won't have any more of it, I say, and they've got to get along without me, or do the next best thing."

When he reached the hotel he told Angie about it, and said that he was going to pack up and return to New York that very night, and that she and Cal must go with him.

"You're not going to do anything of the sort, Josiah Burwick," the lady replied, with considerable acidity. "I am not going home, I'm going to stay here till we leave for Cincinnati and then I'm going there."

"Then I'll take Cal and go alone," sputtered Josiah.

"No, you won't, for Cal is going to stay with me."

"But those wretched jokers will be the death of me," sobbed Josiah.

"Then let them alone," returned Mrs. Josiah.

"I never touch them!"

"Yes you do, you play tricks on them and then they want to get even, as they call it. If you paid no attention to them they would soon stop their nonsense."

"You don't know them as well as I do, Angelina," wailed that poor old duffer. "They'll be all the worse if I don't mind them."

"Well I'm going to Cincinnati anyhow, for I want to visit some of my friends who live there. You can do what you like, but I'm going to stay."

Josiah did not go back to New York that night.

He did not go the next night either, and when the show went on to Cincinnati he went with it.

His wife's words had given him an idea, and he meant to act upon it.

"He would not be passive under his son's and grandson's jokes, but would play one upon them that would just make them sick for one while."

Give him time, and he would get up just as good a joke as Shorty and work it off just as well, too, and then he'd see who had the best right to giggle.

When Josiah set out to work off a snap he did not care how much money it cost, and this one necessitated the outlay of considerable boodle before it was finished.

He stumbled upon the materials for his gag on the day of their arrival in Cincinnati, but he said nothing to anybody about it.

The next morning he said to Shorty as they were all at breakfast in the Grand.

"I have been thinking, George, that we might introduce a little novelty in our show, for instance——"

"We are got everything new dere is, pop," said Shorty.

"Here's some old chestnut coming, I s'pose," snickered the Kid.

"Why don't you let your father state what his idea is, if he has one, George?" said Kate, Shorty's wife.

"Yes," added Caddie, "you and Charlie won't give him any chance at all. He ought to have as good ideas as either of you."

"Better, I think," put in Angie, who always stuck up for the Old Man.

"Chawles, we are sat on very much," said Shorty, with a comical grin.

"Yes, popper, we are," said the Kid, with a broad guage smile.

"My idea is," continued Josiah, "that if you and Charles came in and took your seats after all the rest of us, instead of being there when the curtain goes up you would get more applause."

"Dat's old, pop," cried Shorty and the Kid together.

"You never did it if it is old," remarked Angie.

"There's no harm in trying it, that I can see."

"Thus, you see, instead of doing all that old

business of banging your tamborine on your head and rattling the bones in the overture, you come in after the overture and a fine opening chorus, and there you are," said the Old Man.

"Dat ain't so bad," said George. "You kin say dat we've been playing at a mat in New York, and dat you expect us by der next air-ship."

"That's it, and then you'll be sure to get a lot of applause all to yourselves."

The ladies were all in favor of the change, and this fact greatly aided the success of the Old Man's snap, for there was one hidden away under this new idea of his, you may be sure.

"All right, pop," said Shorty, "we'll try der new biz to-night."

"Guess der ole snoozer ain't going home after all," remarked Charlie to George.

Neither of the little jokers suspected any racket, and, having secured their consent to the change, the Old Man was happy and felt that his snap was already an assured success.

That night when the curtain went up, there was a vacant chair on either end of the semi-circle and the audience wondered thereat.

They seemed to be just ordinary, every-day, covered chairs just like all the rest, but they were not, all they same."

The Old Man beamed upon the audience, arose, advanced a few steps, and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to announce that Shorty and the Kid have performed the astonishing feat of giving an afternoon performance in the city of New York, and that they will appear this very evening, after having accomplished the return trip by telegraph. They are now coming along the wires, and will be here in a few minutes. We will now begin the evening's entertainment with the overture."

That set the big crowd in the Grand Opera House to cheering, for they expected that something good was coming.

After the overture and opening chorus, Shorty and the Kid walked in, took their seats, and were greeted with great applause.

"Fastest time on record, hey, boys?" said Shorty.

"Had to black up before we left York, didn't we, pop, didn't have time to do it on der way?"

Then both the little runts had to get up and bow their acknowledgments, sitting down when the applause had subsided.

When Shorty sat down, a music box of very strong tone was heard playing "Razors in the Air," right under his chair.

Strains of music also issued from the Kid's corner, the tune being "Johnny get your Gun," played very loud.

That was only one feature of the chairs upon which the little imps sat that night.

They were somewhat astonished, and the audience yelled, but Shorty resolved to stick it out.

The Kid concluded to get up, however, thinking that the music would stop if he did.

Up he rose, and the anthem ceased in an instant.

Shorty likewise got up, and both boys bowed.

"Dat'll stop der music, I reckon," remarked Shorty.

"Oh, we're all here, fellers," said the Kid.

The crowd howled, and then George and Charlie sat down.

The music continued playing until the end of the tune was reached, and then there came something like an explosion.

Then the bottoms of the chairs dropped out, the backs shot up and then tumbled over, and there were Shorty and the Kid, each in a cage.

"Up for Six Months," was the legend on Shorty's prison, while "Dude—Very Dangerous Case" ornamented the front of Charlie's box.

The house just got onto the snap in a jiffy, and howled itself hoarse.

That was Josiah's gag, and the boys hadn't tumbled.

"Ah, glad to see you where you ought to have been long ago, George," said the Old Man.

"Hey, grandpop!" yelled Charlie.

"Well?"

"Fetch Georgie's cage over next to mine sc's we kin play checkers wid our noses between der bars."

"You won't have any chance to do that till your time's up," said Josiah.

"Hallo, pop!" bawled George.

"Well?"

"You can't see us now, you know. Can you tell why?"

"Why can't I see you, George?"

"Because we're encaged. See der joke?"

"If he let us out after dat, pop, der people would kill us," wailed the Kid.

"Perhaps you will behave yourselves now?" asked Josiah.

"Say, Ole Man, we're going to argue dis ting out—we're admitted to der bar, you know."

"Behind der bars, you better say, Gawgie."

The audience supposed that this business had

all been studied up beforehand, but it had not, all the same, and that's what made it more funny.

The Old Man now signaled to two stage hands, who had been previously instructed, and they came on, touched a couple of springs, the fronts of the cages swung open, out stepped the prisoners, and then in a jiffy the chairs folded up again resumed their proper shape, and the music boxes played "We've both been there before many a time."

The laugh was on Shorty and the Kid, but the act was a funny one all the same and Shorty determined to have it done regularly every night.

New chairs were brought on and the performance proceeded as usual.

"Wonder where pop got der two infernal machines?" asked Shorty of the Kid, after the first part was over.

Charlie had been investigating affairs and he replied:

"Dere was a sale of trick scenery and other stuff yesterday, things belonging to a busted up spectacle troupe and grandpop bought them two chairs. Had to pay dear for 'em 'cause a couple o' Jew dealers ran him away up. Stage carpenter was dere, but the Ole Man told him not to say nuthin' about it. He fixed der chairs up so they'd work."

"Well, that's one for his nibs," said Shorty, "and a good one too."

"So it is, dad, and now it's our turn. Don't you think so?"

Shorty did think so but nothing was done about it just then.

"I say, dad," said the Kid to Shorty, a day or so after this, "I know a good snap that we kin work on grandpop."

"So do I, Chollie," answered George. "What's yours?"

"Mine's ginger pop with a stick in it, dad," chuckled Charlie.

"Ah, go on. I wasn't asking yer to have something. I only wanted to know what your snap was."

"Well, it's just this," said the Kid, and he whispered a few words in Shorty's ear.

"That'll do fust-rate, if der Ole Man will only bite."

"Oh, he's sure to do that."

"I'dn know; he's pretty skittish about going into any farce snap after we've worked so many rackets onto him."

"Well, we can fix this all hunk. Don't say nuthin' about it till we're nearly ready."

"That's so, and then tell him the other feller was took sick and had to go home."

"That's the ticket, dad, and der Ole Man'll bite sure enough."

That evening after the first part, when Josiah was dressing, Shorty and the Kid entered his room and Shorty said:

"Say, pop, we want yer to be de hind legs of a mule."

"Yes, de oder hind legs has been taken sick, and had to skip."

"And you can do it just as well as he can."

"You can play de hull mule easy enough," put in the Kid, "and der hind legs oughtn'ter be any trouble to you."

Josiah looked considerably astonished at this request, and asked in surprise:

"Play the hind legs of a mule? I don't understand."

"Why, dat's easy enough, pop," said Shorty.

"Easy as breakin' yer neck," added the Kid.

"Well, you must explain, for I really do not know what you mean. How can I be the hind legs of a mule, I'd like to know?"

"You kin be the whole mule, pop, when you get yer back up," laughed George.

"Oh, it's this way," explained the Kid. "Two fellers gets into a dummy what looks like a mule's head and body, and one is der front legs and der oder is der hind legs. Can't yer see dat?"

"Oh, ah, yes, I begin to understand."

"Well, the feller that does der hind legs has took sick," said George.

"And we want you take his place," added Charlie.

"All yer gotter do is ter get under der dummy and kick."

"Oh, he can do that fust class, he's a dandy kicker, he is."

"Den me and Chawles brings dat trick mule in and shows off his good points."

"Dat's all dere is to it, grandpop, and all yer gotter do is ter jump around when we holler."

"Can't you find somebody else to do it?" asked Josiah, trying to hunt up some good excuse for sneaking out of the thing.

"Dere ain't any one small enough, pop," said Shorty. "De oder feller is just your size."

"Why can't you get one of the boys?" pursued Mr. Burwick.

"Dey ain't big enough."

"Oh, come on, grandpop," interposed the Kid,

"What yer beefin' about? We gotter do dat and

pretty soon. It won't hurt yer to be a little obargin', I reckon."

"But I shall have to black up again."

"No, yer won't. Dey won't see yer face."

"Well, I'll help you out this time, but you must get the other man to-morrow, sure."

"Oh, yes, pop; we'll get him."

"To be cert we will, gov'nor."

Having persuaded the Old Man to act the hind legs of the prize mule, it was now only necessary to give him a few instructions.

He wore black tights, and only his legs showed when he got inside the mule's body and caught hold of the cross seat of the frame upon which it was built.

The curtain went up upon a rural scene, with a house, and a well, and a fence, and all that, and then in came Shorty and the Kid, each armed with a split barrel stave.

"Mo'nin', Brudder Flapjacks," said the Kid. "I'se come down yer to do a lilly bit of tradin' wif youse."

"Wha' yo' got ter trade, h'm, Brudder Sunfish?" answered Shorty.

"Jess de cutes' muel yo' eber see in yo' bo'n days, Flappy mah boy."

"Pet yo' he ain' no eutah dan de muel I got a'ready, boy."

"I juss bet yo' a ba'l ob cider he am, my fren', an' don' yo' fo'get it."

"Trot out dat yer muel an' lemme see him, den. Dat am de on'y way to settle der 'spote."

"A'right, I fatch um. Hi here, Jimmy Brown, come in yer," bawled the Kid, stepping to the wing.

That was the cue for the mule to come in, and in he came.

He was a comical looking mule, he was, and everybody giggled.

He had ears like wings, his head was as big as a barrel, his legs were short and his body was seven or eight feet long.

No wonder the people laughed when he came on, and they laughed louder when his tail suddenly stood up straight in the air, the forelegs man having pulled a string which was out of sight, and which worked the caudal appendage.

"Whoa dar, yo' Jimmy Brown, whoa!" cried the Kid, banging that mule under the tail with his split stave.

Josiah Burwick got that crack just below the base of his spine and he gave a dandy jump when he got it, too.

He had not been looking for anything of that sort and he was considerably surprised.

"Ouch!" he grunted, as he gave a jump..

"Whoa, I tell yer!" then cried Shorty, giving him another crack.

That made Josiah jump again and the people roared.

"Never did see such a or'nary bad actin' muel as dat," muttered the Kid. "Keep still, can't youse?"

Then he whacked the mule again, as if that would mend matters any.

"Just yo' let me get at him," said Shorty, and with that he basted that mule's hind quarters.

"Wow!" snorted the Old Man, kicking out one leg in the hope of catching Georgie or Charlie in the shins.

This was not the sort of thing he had expected by any means..

"No wonder the other fellow was taken sick," he thought.

"Don't ink much ob dat muel ob yo'n," grunted Shorty. "I got one m'se', an' yo' don' hab ter whack um eve'y time yo' wan' him to do anyfng."

"Can't t'ink wha' done got into dat muel," muttered the Kid. "He neber ack so befo', neber."

"Wull, he am standiu' still now, anyhow," remarked Shorty. "Show me what he kin do, Brudder Sunfish."

"Whoa, mule! come roun' yer," cried the Kid, and the mule came.

"Stan' on free legs," and the mule did it, raising one foreleg.

"Jump up in front," and the forelegs left the ground for an instant.

"Now jump up behin'," commanded the Kid.

Josiah knew that he was expected to jump, but he did not do it, all the same.

He was not going to run the risk of tumbling all in a heap on the stage.

What he did do was to kick out one leg.

"H'm! I gotter teach dat yer muel suffin', I reckon," said the Kid.

Whack!

Whack!

Josiah got two famous cracks in the rear that time.

Shorty gave him one and the Kid presented him with the other.

"Wow!" he howled, jumping three feet.

"That's just all I'm going to stand of this sort of thing," he growled.

## CHAPTER VIII.

JOSIAH BURWICK had all the fun he wanted out of that mule business.

Shorty and the Kid had been pasting him with barrel staves on the bosom of his knickerbockers until he was tired and sore.

He would not be the hind legs of a mule any longer, if he knew himself.

The way he chucked off that dummy body was surprising, and out he came in plain sight, as mad as a hornet.

He shook his fist at George and Charlie, and sputtered angrily:

"I tell you I won't have any more of this

"We'll do that act every night," added Shorty. "It took immense."

"You'll be sorry for the way you've treated me," growled the Old Man, starting to leave the stage; "when I go away and your old show has to break up."

"When yer goin', pop?" asked Shorty quietly. "Leave us a lock o' your hair when you go, won't you?"

As Josiah had scarcely more than one lock of hair altogether on his head, you can imagine the effect this flippant remark had upon him.

He was so mad that he could not speak.

Away he went to his room, and George remarked to Charlie:

it over, he made up his mind to do something that would make them tired of fooling him.

It took time to think up good snaps, however, and besides, he would have to get limbered up after the basting that Shorty and the Kid had given him before he could settle down to the business of revenge.

In the meantime, something else took place which I shall have to tell you all about.

It had been some time since the Kid and Shorty had played a trick upon Shanks, and they both concluded that one was about due now.

They did not bother him very often, but they



Whack! Whack! Josiah got two famous cracks in the rear that time. Shorty gave him one and the Kid presented him with the other. "Wow!" he howled, jumping three feet. "That's just all I'm going to stand of this sort of thing," he growled.

funny business, and I told you I would not in the first place."

The front legs of the mule now skipped off, laughing and carrying the wreck of the rest of himself with him.

The people in the house roared and howled and clapped and cheered, and you could not hear a word that the Old Man said:

He was in a white face, a white shirt and black legs, while Shorty and the Kid had black faces and were made up like two comical coons.

"What do you mean by banging at me with sticks like that?" sputtered Josiah. "You didn't tell me that was in the act."

Shorty was laughing ready to split, and so was the Kid, but the Old Man was rip-snorting mad.

"It's an outrage, that's just what it is, and I'm going to leave your old show to-morrow, you see if I don't."

Shorty now gave the sign to the prompter in the wings, and a flat was shoved across, closing in the scene.

"You done that bully, grandpop," declared the Kid. "Did you see how the folks was a laffin'?"

"Dat settles der score with his nibs, don't it, bub?"

"I guess it do, pop," said Charlie. "He's as mad as a cat with wet feet, though."

"Oh, he'll get over that, sonny. Der madder he is der sooner he gets glad again."

"He'd go right straight back to New York if it wasn't for yer mother-in-law, dad, but she won't let him."

"Well, Mr. Kid, you better go and get ready for that next act of oun, or you'll keep der stage waitin' an' get fined. See?"

Josiah was as surly as a sore-headed bear the next day, and wouldn't have anything to say to any one.

He was literally rather sore also, for the boys had given him some jolly good whacks with those barrel staves, and the Old Man still felt the stings when he went to sit down.

"What's the use of trying to get square on those boys?" he asked himself. "Even if I do, then they get up something a good deal worse, and I get left all around."

That was about the size of it, but Josiah had learned that the boys would play jokes upon him even if he did nothing, and after thinking

and then, just for the sake of old times.

This was one of the times, and those two jolly jokers did not waste much time in getting ready a regular biscuit purloiner for old Shanks.

One day the latter was sitting in the box office selling tickets when a lady came up to the window and asked:

"Say, are you the man that advertised for a lady to join your company? I want to go on the stage. I do, and my friends say I can do first rate. I've acted out in our town lots of times, and if you seen me you'd say I was the best you ever seen, and so I am. I can act out—"

"For heaven's sake, give us a rest!" howled Shanks, who was afraid he would be talked deaf, dumb, and blind if he did not look out.

"Well, if you want to hire me you got to pay me big money," continued the woman. "You can't get me for nothing, you can't, and don't you forget it. You never seen me act out, didn't you. Well, you—"

"I am not engaging any ladies," shouted Shanks, "and I don't want to see you act. Step aside please. You are keeping those ladies

waiting. How many seats would you like, ma'am?"

Shanks thought that the woman he saw standing behind the first one wanted to buy tickets, and he hailed the event with joy.

Judge of his astonishment, therefore, when one torment slipped aside merely to make room for another, who said:

"If you want a first-class singing lady for your company, you want to take me. I ain't no jay, I ain't, and if you take me you'll get—"

"Fooled I" piped up a lady in the background. "You don't want her at all unless you're looking for fakes. If you take me you'll—"

"Ahem, if you want a good tragedy lady,"

head from a black bag on her arm, and cleared her throat.

"Great guns! how did you get in here?" stammered the manager. "I don't want—"

Just then the door opened and two more ladies walked in and began to talk at the rate of forty miles an hour, all arguing their claims as members of the new company.

Poor Shanks was nearly distracted, and looked around for an avenue of escape.

He ran up the window, thinking that possibly he could get out that way.

The moment the window was opened he saw three women standing close to it, and all three began to talk at once.

"Or a tragedy—"

They were all talking again and Shanks could not hear himself think.

"For Heaven's sake, hush up!" he bawled. "Come on the stage and I'll talk to you."

Shanks said this so as to get rid of the gang, for as soon as he got out of that office he meant to make a break.

"Oh, that'll be nice!" screamed all the girls.

Those in the rear fell back and Shanks was given a chance to get out.

As soon as he reached the lobby he made a dash for the door leading to the parquet.

The tragedy woman seized his coat-tails, the leading woman caught on to tragedy's wrap



"What do you mean by banging at me with sticks like that?" sputtered Josiah. "You didn't tell me that was in the act." Shorty was laughing ready to split, and so was the Kid, but the Old Man was rip-snorting mad.

said another voice, "you can't do better than to—"

"You don't want to listen to any of them women," cried still another aspirant. "I'm the very—"

"For goodness' sake, shut up!" roared Shanks, who was generally the politest of men. "I don't want to engage anybody. My company is full and I don't want any ladies anyhow."

Then all the women, and there were seven or eight of them, began talking all at once, and poor Shanks thought he would be deafened.

In desperation he closed the window with a bang, and muttered to himself:

"Good grief! I've got rid of 'em at last. Who in thunder sent—"

"Now that we are alone," piped a voice at his elbow, "I would just like to recommend myself to—"

Shanks jumped, turned and saw a tall, masculine looking woman sitting beside him.

"Of course, you want a leading lady," she went on, "and a good one. Here are a few extracts from the press which will interest you."

The lady then produced a roll as big as her

Down went the window in a jiffy, and Shanks turned to find the office full of women, and more coming in at the door.

The din was something surprising, for everybody talked at once, and in a dozen different keys.

"Shut up!" yelled Shanks, nearly splitting his throat in order to make himself heard.

A silence fell upon the crowd.

"Now, what in thunder do you want?" asked the distressed manager.

The racket began again, all the women talking at the tops of their voices.

"Shut up!" howled Shanks, banging his fist on the shelf in front of him. Once more there was silence in the ranks, and Shanks breathed easier.

"Now then, don't all talk at once," he began. "I tell you I'm not engaging any company and—"

"Oh, what a story!"

"What made you advertise?"

"It's just a fake."

"You're real mean."

"You're just a skin."

"If you want a leading—"

"Or a good singing—"

and the whole gang followed in a string, each member of it hanging on to the one in front, like the tail of a kite.

Shanks could not get away as easily as he thought.

Down the main aisle he ran, the gang tagging after him, till he reached the orchestra railing.

"Great Scott! I'll never get rid of them," he muttered.

However, he gave a jump, leaped the rail and dove down under the stage where he found Shorty and the Kid.

"Hallo, Shanksy," said Shorty. "What's this? Practicin' for a knock-about act, hey?"

"You done dat dive immense," remarked the Kid. "Let's see you do it again."

"Sh! let me get away," muttered the manager. "There's about forty women out there waiting for me."

"What do they want of yer, Shanksy? You ain't going to marry 'em, are you?"

"No—no, of course not. Somebody told 'em I was going to get up a new company and they all want positions."

"Going to get up a female minstrel troupe, are you?"

"Haven't you got enough to do already?"

"Didn't think you'd go back on us like that, Shanks."

"Wait till de Old Man hears it and he'll kick."

"But I'm not going to do anything of the kind," stammered Shanks. "It's all a mistake, I tell you."

"Don't believe there's anybody there at all," said Shorty.

"Of course dey ain't," said the Kid. "Dat's only a guy Shanks is giving us."

"Dat's all it is."

"But I tell you the women are there," persisted Shanks.

"Well, then, let's go and talk to them," said Shorty, starting.

"Not that way!" cried Shanks. "Let's go on the stage."

He led the way, followed by Shorty and the Kid.

"Dere, what did I tell yer?" remarked Shorty when they were all on the stage looking out upon the house.

"Where's yer women?" asked the Kid. "I knowed it was only a fake."

There were no women sure enough, only a dozen or so members of the company sitting about in the orchestra chairs.

Shanks looked very much surprised, as well as delighted.

"Thank goodness they've gone!" he ejaculated.

Suddenly a chorus of shrill voices assailed him:

"There he is again!"

"Now we've got him!"

"Come on girls."

"I want that job, you fraud!"

"Leading lady!"

"Singing comedian."

"Tragedy!"

Shanks nearly jumped out of his shoes.

He looked around, expecting to see that army of women behind him.

There wasn't a woman in sight, either in front or behind, or anywhere else.

Then the minstrel boys in front let out a roar of laughter. After that they all yelled again, each in a female voice, just like those that had so frightened Shanks.

Then that poor deluded man smelled a rat.

There never had been any lady applicants for places in the company at all.

Shorty and the Kid had got some of the company to make up like women and roast poor old Shanks, that was all.

Shanks tumbled at last and all hands laughed.

"That'll cost you a supper, Shanksy," said Shorty.

"And don't forget der pop, ole pard," put in the Kid.

Then Shanks was disgusted.

"I haven't got any time to waste on you fellows," he sputtered, and off he started for the box office.

He was not disturbed again that day by ambitious actresses, but whenever he met one of the company after that, for a week, he heard flippant remarks about the new company he was getting up, and it made him very tired.

Shorty and the Kid let him alone after that, giving their attention to the Old Man instead.

Josiah had not yet tried to get square on the boys for that last racket on himself, but he was thinking of it all the same.

"What I want to do," he argued with himself, "is to get up some joke which will make them so sick that they will never try to play off any more rackets on me, and then I'll stop."

He did not seem to remember that those little jokers would never stop joking till they were dead, by the way.

One good snap would cure them, he argued, and he began studying up to see what that would be.

In the meantime, however, those three lively boys—the Shorty kids—concluded to try their hands at skylarking, and chose the Old Man as the object of their fun.

They did always take him for a mark, for obvious reasons, and when they did, they went to work with the greatest caution.

Late one afternoon they went over the Rhine, which in Cincinnati means across the canal in the German quarter of the city, and procured a goat.

They could not steal the Billy, and so they borrowed him—upon payment of a certain sum—promising to deliver him in the morning to the owner.

The goat was conducted to the theater and placed in the Old Man's room shortly before the arrival of that respectable old party.

In came Mr. Burwick, attended by Ginger, and straightway went to his dressing-room.

The coon was the first to go in, of course, so as to turn up the light, et cetera.

The goat had become weary of the solitude of the place by this time, and Ginger's coming aroused him.

The first thing that the dandy coon was aware of was a punch in the stomach from some invisible object.

"Wow! Wha' dat?" he ejaculated, striking out blindly with his umbrella.

Billy got a crack between the eyes, and that made him mad.

Up he got on his hind legs and made a charge at Ginger.

Ginger was hot when he got a biff in the chest from that goat's horns and went down.

He fell against the Old Man in his sudden jump backwards, and Josiah immediately sat down with a force that loosened his false teeth.

"Bless mah haht, wha' dat?" sputtered Mr. Jones.

Mr. Burwick had come provided with an umbrella as well as Ginger, and he began to use it. Ginger got a crack on the skull with it, but that was nothing.

When the Old Man took him in the ear with it, however, it was more of a circumstance.

"What do you mean by knocking me down like that, you clumsy fool?" demanded Josiah.

"Didn't know I did it, 't all, Marse Burwick," said Ginger, getting up.

"Well, you did, you big clown," snarled Josiah, "and you want to be careful—"

Just then that goat made a rush, missed Ginger, and set the Old Man down again.

This time Josiah dropped his false teeth out of his mouth.

Mr. Billy did not stop to pick them up, although they would have been a choice morsel for him, but skipped out instead.

Those three bad boys were on the watch for him, for they didn't care to let him roam around at will in the theater.

They captured and carried him to a safe place, gave him some old scenery to chew on, and left him.

Josiah secured his teeth, replaced them and got on his feet, very mad.

When that quiet old gent got really mad, his temper was far from angelic, let me tell you.

Ginger had gone ahead, lighted up the dressing room and was getting out his master's things when the Old Man came in.

"What do you mean by knocking me down, you black rascal?" he demanded in business-like tones.

"Clar fo' it, I couldn't help it Marse Burwick," stammered poor Ginger.

"Couldn't help it, hey?" snorted Josiah.

"No, sah, 'deed I couldn't. Suffin' wen' smash inter me an' done frow me down on de flo' an' I done bunked inter yo', sah, dat's de way it really happen."

"You didn't have to do it twice, did you, confound your black skin?" sputtered the Old Man, removing his hat and overcoat without Ginger's help.

"No, sah, an' dat am de mos' mysterious paht ob it. Couldn't tol' yo' wha' dat was, but suffin' rush a pas' me, an' de nex' ting I hyar yo' set down on de flo' putty solid."

"H'm!" said the Old Man, with a grunt, sitting down.

"Deed, I couldn't tell what it was, boss," said Ginger.

That settled things for that coon.

The Old Man had especially charged him never to address him as boss.

Troublesome times were coming for Mr. Ginger Jones.

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. BURWICK was sitting in his shirt sleeves just in the act of taking off his shoe when Ginger used that forbidden expression.

Off came that shoe in a jiffy and up jumped the Old Man, red-hot mad.

"How dare you!" he cried, going for Ginger with that shoe like a thousand of brick.

"Call me boss, will you, when I have repeatedly told you not to? I won't have it, I tell you, I won't have it!"

The irascible old party emphasized these remarks by pasting Ginger with that shoe, the toe of which he held in his hand.

"Hol' on, boss, hol' on!" yelled Mr. Jones, cowering in a corner by the door and trying to protect himself.

The repetition of the interdicted word was to Josiah Burwick what waving an auctioneer's

flag in the face of a bull would be to that short tempered animal.

"Keep it up, will you, in spite of my express orders, eh?"

Whack!

"What you want is a good basting, you do!"

Whack—spat!

"I'll teach you respect to your superiors, I will!"

Slash—smack—whack!

The old man had not lost the power of his good right arm by a large majority.

He had lots of muscle left and he knew how to put it to good use.

Every remark he made was backed up with a crack of that shoe, and each crack was put in where it would talk.

Poor Ginger tried to make himself small and squeezed right up into the corner, but Josiah reached him at every shot.

"Hol' on, Marse Burwick," he grunted, when he got a crack in the hand he put up to shield his face. "Dat's 'nuff, sah, dat's 'nuff."

"Don't you try to tell me what is enough and what isn't," sputtered Josiah, pasting Ginger in the ribs with his handy but very unusual weapon.

He was beginning to get weary, being unaccustomed to violent exercise, and the sweat poured off his bald head and down his fat cheeks in big drops.

Poor Ginger was cowering and trembling in the corner, wondering what it all meant, for he had not seen the Old Man in such a temper for years.

"Don't hit me no mo', Marse Burwick, please don't," he wailed. "I don't know wha's de mattah, 'deed I doesn't, but ef you 'scuse me dis time, I won't do it no mo'. Didn't go fo' to call yo' out ob yo' name, 'deed I didn't, sah."

The Old Man was satisfied to let the thing stop now, for he was pretty well used up.

"See that you behave yourself in future, then," he sputtered, "and you won't get punished."

He was not particularly good-natured, even then, and Ginger was mighty glad when the dressing was through with.

Presently, being dressed and blacked up, Josiah went down to the green-room to wait until it was time to take his place on the stage for the first part of the performance.

Then Mr. Ginger Jones let himself loose.

"If dat ole ge'man don't beat de debbil," he remarked, "I wouldn't say so. Wha' fo' he wan'ter get mad like dat an' pas'e me wif he shoe fo', I like to know?"

"Ain't neber gib him no cause fo' to treat me like dat, I habn't. Pears ter me he got a heap ob cheek to take him shoe to me jess like I was a yaller dog or sumfin like dat!"

"I jess tol' yo', dat ole ge'man hab gotter go slow wif me, 'less he get inter trouble. Ole fambly serbants like me c'n stan' a heap, but dere am some tings dat yo' gotter draw de line at, an' pastin' fellahs wif heaby shoes am one ob dem."

Shorty's dressing-room was next to that of his dad, and the little runt heard Ginger's remarks very plainly through the partition.

Having finished dressing, he strolled in and asked:

"What's the matter between you and the Old Man, Ginge? Been lambastin' yer, has he?"

Ginger Jones was not the coon to tell tales out of school, and he replied:

"Ain' nuffin' 'tall de mattah 'tween me an' de ole ge'man, Marse Gawge. We'se de bes' ob frien's, we is, sah."

"Ah, go on," said Shorty. "De ole gent busted yer in der snoot with his shoe, and said yer was no good. Didn't I hear der hull of it? Wot yer givin' me?"

"Wall, Marse Gawge, some times I jiss can't make out what am wrong wif de ole ge'man," said Ginger, finding that Shorty knew about the trouble.

"Oh, he's a crank, dat's wot he is," laughed Shorty, "but that ain't no reason why he should belt you with a shoe."

"Deed it amn't, Marse Gawge, "an' I ain't been use ter no sich ways as dem. If I hadn't libed in de fambly a long time, I jiss wouldn't stan' it."

"Don't see what you want to stand it for, anyhow," said Shorty. "If I was you, I'd get even on the old duffer for that."

The little scamp saw a good chance for a racket here, and some time he meant to work it up.

He did not say any more about it just now, for it was nearly time to go on, and he wanted to tell the Kid about the racket.

Later on he heard some of the stage hands laughing about a goat that had somehow got into Josiah's room, and had scared the coon into fits, and made him upset the father of all the Shortys.

Then Shorty tumbled a little bit, but not to the full extent, for he never suspected Cal, Ed and Peter of putting the Billy into the Old Man's room.

"Dat's what made pop mad in der fust place," he chuckled, "and den Gingie said something and got it in der neck. Well, dat's a good foundation to work on, and der Kid an' me orter get up a dandy snap from that much."

The Kid thought the same, and when those

"Shall I have it opened for you?" asked the clerk.

"Why, yes, I suppose so," muttered the Old Man. "One has a natural curiosity to know what's in a box, of course. Yes, you might have it opened, I suppose."

The clerk called a couple of porters, and the work of getting the box open was started.

The top seemed to be screwed on, and it was, therefore, not much of a job to get it off.

While this was going on, Shorty, the Kid, Shanks and the three boys came along and watched the proceedings.

Nobody said a word, but all seemed very much interested.

whole gang pressed forward to see what was in the box.

Of course the men could not work under such circumstances, and they did nothing.

"Well, why don't you take out the straw?" cried Mrs. Josiah.

"Just like a lot of men to stand there doing nothing!" snapped Mrs. George.

"I'd have it out in a second, I would," sputtered Mrs. Kid.

"Oh, yes, you'd do lots," snorted the Kid himself. "Why don't you get o' der way and let der men get to work?"

The ladies took the hint with not a very good grace, and all hands fell back.



"Hol' on, Marse Burwick," he grunted, when he got a crack in the hand he put up to shield his face. "Dat's 'nuff, sah, dat's 'nuff." "Don't you try to tell me what is enough and what isn't," sputtered Josiah.

two jokers got ready to work up that particular snap, you can bet your shoestrings that it was bound to be very fine and large.

Somebody made the Old Man a present a day or so later, but who it was he never really found out.

One morning a box came to the hotel addressed to Josiah Burwick, Esq., all the charges paid, et cetera, the expressman leaving the same in the rotunda in front of the desk.

When Josiah came down-stairs, the clerk called his attention to the box and asked what should be done with it.

The Old Man looked at the box, but could not tell where it came from, as it seemed to be marked all over with half obscured directions, and with different labels, one over the other.

"What is it?" he asked blankly.

"Don't know, sir. It came this morning. Thought you might like to unpack it down here."

"H'm! yes, that's good idea. It may contain a picture or a statue or something like that, and we wouldn't like to break it taking it upstairs."

Presently, also, the wives of the three Shortys joined the group, but they did say something.

Can you find three women or even one who wouldn't say something when a box was being opened.

If she did not want to do the work, she would certainly express an opinion as to what the thing contained.

The Burwick ladies did both, each in her own way.

Angie said she knew that those clumsy men would smash something, Kate declared that it was a shame George and Charlie did not offer to help, and Caddie observed that if the Old Man had a present he ought to open the box himself.

Josiah's wife was sure that the box contained dresses for herself, Shorty's better-half expressed the opinion that it was just another joke of George's, while the Kid's partner asserted with great positiveness that the package contained Christmas gifts for all hands, although the holidays were still a long way off.

The cover was removed at last, and then the

Then the porters took out a layer of straw and threw it on the floor.

"It's China, I know!" cried Angie.

"No, it's a picture!" said Kate.

"I know it's presents," shrieked Caddie.

"Reckon it's a cake," said Shorty.

"Dad allus did take that."

Out came some more straw, and then one of the men loosened a slat nailed across the box inside.

In a jiffy there was a terrible yelling and screaming.

The women howled, the boys danced and laughed, the men guffawed and the Old Man looked scared.

Out came a big snake and went for Josiah in a jiffy.

The way that that Old Man put for the stairs was a caution.

He was sure that the monster would envelope him in its slimy folds before he could escape.

The ladies fainted as soon as they could find convenient places to fall in, Shanks remembered an appointment he had down town, the

Kid jumped upon the counter, and Shorty hid behind the box.

The Old Man hoofed it in lively fashion for the stairs, the snake following, a good second, and after it chased the Shorty kids.

They reached the snake before the latter caught the Old Man, and Peter jumped on its tail.

"Bully for our side!" laughed Cal, running in front of the monster.

Then there was a whirr like a clock running down, and the snake wriggled a little and then lay still.

The Old Man looked down from the top of the first flight and yelled:

"California, my son, go away from that dangerous beast."

"Ah, go take a walk!" answered that disrespectful youth. "It's only a cod, pop."

"Scared into fits by a fake snake!" laughed Ed. "Well, I wouldn't tell it!"

"Let's save it to scare Ginger with," suggested Peter.

Then those boys picked up the serpent, which was a combination of India rubber, clock-work and wood, and carted it towards the reading-room.

"Put down that nasty thing, Peter!" cried Kate. "Aren't you ashamed to handle it?"

"It won't hurt, ma," laughed Shorty's hopeful. "It's only a toy snake."

Then all the Shorty women suddenly recovered, and had something to say.

"The idea!"

"It's just too mean!"

"Some folks are too funny!"

"I can't see the fun of it myself."

"You just ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

"Frightening us all into fits with that horrid

thing and calling it a joke!"

"It's just the meanest thing I ever heard of,

that's what it is!"

"Oh, I soy," said Shorty, "don't you get rattled, sis. Me an' Charlie didn't have nothin' to do wid dis."

"Well, you're always playing tricks," snapped Angie, "and it's just too mean."

"Oh, yes, and popsey never plays any on us, does he?" laughed the Kid. "How about that racket with der chairs?"

The three boys, carrying the trick snake on their shoulders, marched up-stairs, scaring the Old Man away, and reaching the first landing just as Ginger Jones stepped out of the elevator coming down.

The first thing he knew a snake's head was poked into his face and he heard a hissing sound.

His hair stood on end in a jiffy, and he shook like a cat in a fit.

"De lawd sabe us! Whar dat ting come fom!" he gasped, unable to stir a foot.

That made the boys laugh and they dropped the snake on the floor.

Then Shorty and the Kid appeared on the scene.

"Here, young fellers, take dat ting and put it in der box," said Shorty, "and don't go to scar-ing the life out of folks."

The boys dusted out and Shorty suspected them of getting up the snap, but nobody ever really found out whether they had or not.

They said they had not and their daddies were obliged to believe them.

Later on a note was found in the box which explained matters somewhat.

It came from a novelty dealer in New York, and was substantially as follows:

"Send you per express one mechanical snake which think you can use in farces. If do, please gives line on programmes."

How the man happened to send the thing to Josiah, however, was a mystery that was never satisfactorily explained.

"Some of the boys of the profesh in New York must have got it up," said Shorty, "and had der thing sent to pop because dey knowed how we was always a running him."

"Well, we can play de old farce of 'Metamora,' pop, what Archie Hughes and John Mulligan used to be so great in," suggested the Kid, "and use dis snake for de wood scene."

"Yes, or fake up a new one, only you won't get der Ole Man to have anything to do with dat snake."

"Den we'll get up something else for him," suggested Shorty.

The trick snake was put in the property trunk for future use, while George and Charley devised some other means of rattling the old gentleman.

When they opened their second week in Cincinnati, they started in with an entirely new landscape.

programme, and one of the features of this was the old farce of "The Robbers," with variations.

The Old Man was asked to take a small part, simply to fill up, and, as the thing seemed innocent enough, he consented.

All he had to do was to sit in a safe and be discovered when the two bold burglars, Shorty and the Kid, forced it open.

He did not know who the burglars were, however, when the proposition was made, or he might not have consented.

The safe was simply a big box, properly painted, with a false back to it, so that the Old Man could get in without being seen, for that was to be a surprise to the audience.

When the farce began he came in, wearing a long dressing gown and a big night cap, and carrying a candle.

"I am terribly afraid of burglars," he remarked. "To-night I have brought home the money for the salaries of the men in the mill, forty-seven cents, and I am almost afraid to have it in the house. I think I will put it in the safe."

Then he opened the safe, threw in a very small bag, which made a very loud noise as it fell, and closed the door.

Having done this, he brought out a bunch of keys, each two feet long, and proceeded to lock the doors, after which he went away, taking the light with him.

Then he went around to the back of the scene and got in the safe, the false back being fastened securely.

Then to slow music and the light of a bull's eye lantern enter Shorty and the Kid through a trap in the stage.

"I disguised myself as a ton of coal, got put inter de suller, and yer I am," said Shorty.

"Hush!" shouted the Kid. "Make no noise. The boss is stone deaf and might hear us."

"Aha, ha, ha! yonder is the geeold!" cried Shorty, making a Henry Irving slide clean across the stage. "Come on, O'Reilly; it is ours."

Then those bold, bad burglars got a pair of sledge-hammers and two big spikes, drove in the latter and proceeded to play "The Anvil Chorus" on them to the accompaniment of the band.

"Ha, ha, ho, ho! we waste time," remarked Shorty.

"What's the matter with taking it with us and openin' it at home?" asked the Kid.

Here's where the joke on the Old Man made its appearance.

This part of the sketch had not been rehearsed, by the way.

"You're right, ha, ha!" cried Shorty.

Then he and the Kid grabbed hold of the safe and dumped it over on its side.

The Old Man was inside, you may remember.

"Hold on! Stop that!" he howled.

Shorty and the Kid paid no attention to him. They gave the safe another turn and that gave Josiah another shake-up.

"Let me out!" he bawled, and the audience thought it great fun.

Then the two little runts tipped the safe again, putting it face downwards.

Josiah was getting more fun than he had bargained for.

The jokers gave the safe another turn and the front was now to the audience.

Then the Kid opened the trap in the stage while Shorty threw open the safe door.

The safe, by the way, was right in front of the open trap.

#### CHAPTER X.

The moment that the door of the big property safe was opened out came the Old Man as mad as a hatter.

He bounced out, shaking his fist and scolding at Shorty and the Kid who stood down toward the footlights.

The house laughed, for they thought it was all very funny.

Josiah did not, and he took a couple of steps intending to go down and tell the audience how he had been abused and imposed upon.

He went down, surely, but he did not tell the gang in the house anything.

Of course you remember the open trap in front of the safe?

The Old Man went down that and landed on a feather bed, somewhat shaken up but in no wise injured.

Then Shorty closed the trap, he and the Kid rushed down to the footlights and began doing a lively jig, and the scene was closed in with a landscape.

The old man landed on his back and was not hurt, but he was mad all the same, and when he got up he looked around for some one upon whom to vent his wrath.

He could not see a soul, the trap above him was closed, and from the house could be heard the sound of rapturous applause.

"H'm! 'most break a man's neck and then pay no attention to him," muttered that wrathful party. "Those boys don't care any more for me than if I was a total stranger, but I'll get even on 'em, see if I don't."

The music continued, the laughter swelled and went down and swelled again, and nobody paid the least attention to the old man under the stage.

"I'll fix them for that," he muttered as he made his way up to his dressing-room. "I'll go right away home to-night."

When he looked at his pocketbook, however, he found that he did not have money enough, and if he meant to go home he would have to borrow money from Shanks, for of course Shorty would not lend it to him.

"Well, I can't go to-night," he muttered, "but just as soon as I can get word to my bankers I'll get the money and leave."

However, when he could get the money he had changed his mind about going home.

This state of things was partly brought about by a little racket which he worked off upon Shorty and the Kid in the course of a day or so.

You see, those little runts did not always reckon upon the chances of the Old Man tumbling to a snap before it was over with, and that's where they sometimes got left.

This was the case in the instance which I am about to put on record.

Shorty put the old-time pantomime farce of the "Black Statue" in rehearsal for the sole purpose of getting up a snap on the Old Man.

You all know the story, of course, the thing having been done no end of times.

A young fellow loves a girl and gets fired out by her father, and afterwards gets in the house in the disguise of a mechanical figure which strikes certain attitudes to slow music.

This statue has a club, and when the old gent goes to grind the thing after the exhibitor has departed, he gets a crack in the rear, and that's where the laugh comes in.

Shorty was to play the statue, the Kid was to be the bad boy who gets him fired out, and the Old Man was to be the stern parent, other characters to be taken by the company.

Of course Shorty would knock the Old Man silly with a crack of his stuffed club when he went to wind up the figure, and then there would be a grand laugh, and Mr. Burwick would declare that he was going home.

When Shorty proposed the thing the Old Man took a tumble, for he remembered having been taken in by that same farce once before, though Shorty forgot it.

"Why, yes, I suppose I might play in it," he said, in a reluctant tone, "though you know I don't like farces, and you boys are always cutting up some monkey shine or other."

"Oh, no, honest Injun, we ain't pop, you know we ain't!" declared Shorty. "We wouldn't do it for der world."

"Ah, go on, grandpop, what are yer scared of?" said the Kid. "Do you think we ain't got nothin' to do but play gags on you? Ah, go on, you old stuff."

The Old Man finally said he would play, and, as there was nothing to say he would have no trouble.

Shorty put the thing on as a pantomime spectacle, and not as an ordinary nigger farce, and the whole company was in it.

The first scene showed a garden with a set cottage at one side and a green carpet down, and it opened with a village dance and festival.

A dozen song and dance men in dandy costumes, six couples in all, set the ball a rolling.

Then Shorty and the female impersonator had a song and dance, the Kid catching them at their spooning and rushing off to tell the father of the girl.

That brought in the Old Man and he stormed around in pantomime and had Shorty fired out of the place, this being followed by a burlesque ballet dance in which the shorty kids figured as premiers, in black tights, short fluffy skirts and all the other fixings of a ballet girl.

Finally, the stage being cleared, the black statue is rolled in on its pedestal, and all hands are called in to look at it.

Shorty, in black tights, red trunks and a big club, looked just too sweet for anything, so a party of girls in one of the boxes declared.

In came the stern parent, the girl, the old

woman, the village lads and lassies and the bad boy, otherwise that same bad Kid.

The crank was turned, the jerky music was played, and Shorty went through his exercises.

Then the Old man bought the statue, the three kids did an acrobatic act, and all hands went out leaving Shorty alone on the stage.

In came the Old Man, and here was where Shorty expected to get off a good joke on him.

The slipper covered another set of corns this time, however.

Shorty stood as still as a lump of coal, his back to the Old Man who came in with a big, overgrown stuffed club in his hands.

Shorty thought the Old Man was going to

"I don't care how you finish it," laughed Josiah. "I've got square on you, George, and that's all I care about."

Then he marched up and off the stage with the club on his shoulder, and Shorty discovered that he was still in the soup.

However, the Kid came to his rescue, for he called on all hands, Shorty got his girl, there was a grand walk around by the company to lively music and red fire, and down went the green baize.

The Old Man was ahead that time, and no mistake, and those jolly jokers had to acknowledge it.

"Pop stole a base on yer dat time, didn't he,

Then he got a touch of the old rheumatism, which made him as cranky as a bear with a sore head, or a woman without a new bonnet at Easter, and this put things in good shape for a return racket, that accounts might be squared.

One day Shorty and the Kid met Ginger Jones on the street, the Old Man having sent him on an errand.

Shorty winked at the Kid, and then said to the coon:

"Hallo, Ginger, how are you and the Old Man getting on together these days?"

"Oh, we gets on a'right, Marse Gawge," answered Ginger, with a puzzled expression.



"Will call me names an' knock me 'bout an' frow tings at me, will yer?" demanded the moke. "Oh, Lord, what shall I do?" groaned the Old Man, trying to squeeze himself into a corner. "I got yo' dis time, an' I'se gwine ter make yer sorry, I is."

turn the crank in the pedestal, and he chuckled inwardly to think how he would whack him.

Somebody else got whacked.

Biff!

Shorty suddenly got a crack in the neck that sent him flying off that pedestal in a jiffy.

"Ha, ha! I knew you were a fraud!" sang out the Old Man, as everybody laughed.

It certainly was not what Shorty had expected, and for a moment he was all broke up.

He sat on the stage with his legs stretched out and a most rueful expression on his usually jolly mug.

"Want some more, George?" asked the Old Man, coming down with the club over his shoulder. "Ain't so funny this time, is it?"

"Well, I'll be blowed!" laughed the Kid, in the wings, "if der Ole Man hasn't scored one on pop dis time and no mistake."

Suddenly Shorty grinned and said in a low tone:

"Well, pop, now dat you've knocked me out, how are you going to finish der piece?"

The house laughed at this, for they thought the whole thing was intentional.

dad?" chuckled the Kid, when the show was over.

"I guess you put him up to it, didn't yer?"

"No, I didn't. Wish I may die if I did."

"Then Shanksy gave him a tip, I guess."

"Maybe he did, pop."

"We'll have to give his nibbs one for that, then."

"Maybe grandpop took a tumble himself, dad."

"Maybe he did, but it's der fust time he ever did."

"Oh, you can't always tell which way a pig's going to run, dad."

"Well, let's say dat der Ole Man got it up himself. It wasn't a bad gag, anyhow."

"No, but if you play der piece again you'll have to swear yer won't fool with grandpop, or you'll get biffed again yer own self."

"Yes, dat's so, Chawles."

The Old Man had the laugh on Shorty anyhow, and that made him feel so good that he did not bullyrag Ginger Jones, nor talk of going home, nor growl at anyone for at least two days.

"H'm! you're a big stuff to stand all his guff, I think," grunted Shorty.

"Course you are," put in the Kid. "You let him baste you with his shoe or der bootjack or anything else, I reckon, just as much as he wants ter."

"Yes, and bimeby he'll walk all over yer, and yer won't say nuthin', I s'pose," said Shorty.

"Oh, but you're der kind of a coon dat don't mind dat," sneered the Kid. "You ain't got no spunk, you ain't."

"No, you ain't got no spoatin' blood, you ain't," said Shorty.

"Wha'-wha' you mean Marse Gawge?" stammered the coon.

"Oh, you don't know o' course," retorted Shorty, elevating his nose.

"No, sah, 'deed I doesn't, Marse Gawge," replied the coon.

"You'll just let that cranky old duffer paste you and lambaste you and knock you round, and never say nuthin', o' course," said Shorty.

"If it was me I'd soak him in der jaw," remarked the Kid, putting on a particularly tough look.

"Dat's der only way ter fetch him to his senses," added Shorty.

"Cert," responded the Kid. "Give him one good wallopin' an' he won't bother yer no more."

"Yes, but Gingie ain't got de sand fur dat," sniffed Shorty.

"Ha, he didn't orter be named Ginger at all. Der kind of ginger he's made of wouldn't sell for ten cents a ton."

"No, dere ain't no snap in him, dere ain't."

"Lettin' a old crank like dat hammer him wid a shoe and throw things at him! Do yer know what I'd do?"

"Soak it to him, right in der neck, of course, just what any decent man would do."

That coon was somewhat stumped at receiving such advice from Shorty and the Kid, but he swallowed it without grease all the same.

He never tumbled to the fact that they were only guying him, but took everything they said for downright up-and-down truth.

"Tra-la, Gingie," said Shorty, turning to go. "Here's a quarter for you. They have bang-up stuff in der place around der corner."

"We ain't tellin' yer ter get full, of course not," supplemented the Kid, "but if you was doin' it, there's prime stuff to do it with in der place der gov'nor told you about. Here's a quarter dat belongs to you. Wonder how it got inter my pocket?"

Ginger could see through a brick after somebody had kindly made a hole in it for him, and after bidding a kindly adieu to the two runts, he sailed around to that certain place and began filling up.

A man can get howlingly intoxicated on fifty cents' worth of fire-water, provided he takes the right kind, but they were not selling fusil oil and aqua-fortis at the place where Ginger went.

All he could get was three portions of liquid refreshments of a very good kind for his demi piaster, but that paved the way for more.

He did not get it until he was about to go to the theater with the Old Man, however, and then somebody carelessly left a small bottle of booze in his room.

That coon promptly annexed it and then he began to think of what the boys had said to him.

When he went to help the Old Man into his carriage that irascible old party snarled at him for not looking out for his rheumatism and called him a black chump and an ebonized pudding head more than once.

That also set Ginger to thinking and it was not all that did so, either.

The Old Man gave him a belt with his stick when he got out of the carriage and requested him to pay a visit to his Satanic majesty.

In fact, the Old Man was not feeling just right for his business and that made Ginger Jones feel more than just right for his.

"Bressed if I stan' any mo' ob his nonsense," muttered the coon as he let the Old Man go into the theater alone.

"Now then, you old black fool, are you going to make me get up these steps alone, or aren't you," snarled Josiah.

"Yas'r!" said the coon, but he let Josiah go it alone.

When the Old Man reached his dressing-room, there was no Ginger to turn up the gas or do anything else.

The coon had dropped on the way to drink the remaining contents of that small bottle of his.

He did not show up until the end of the first part, and Josiah had to make up and dress without his assistance.

When he did come in Josiah had got off everything except his shirt and was removing the burned cork, with cold cream and a towel, one half of his face being white and the rest black.

When the coon appeared, the Old Man went for him.

"Now then, you confounded black jack-ass," he sputtered, "what do you mean by keeping me waiting like this till you get ready to come to me?"

"Look yer, boss, don' yo' talk to me like o' dat!" growled Ginger, "kase I ain'a gwine ter stan' it."

Josiah was somewhat astonished to say the least.

"Oh, you ain't, eh?" he gasped, grabbing up a hair-brush.

"No, I isn't!"

Whish!

The hair-brush flew across the room, aimed straight for Ginger's head.

That settled it.

This was a declaration of war, and that was what Ginger was ready for.

He caught the brush and sent it back again.

Smash!

If the Old Man had not ducked, he would have got it right on the nose.

As it was, the mirror had a hole smashed right out of it.

Josiah was not so lucky the next time, however.

That was when Ginger grabbed a shoe and sent it spinning across the room.

Josiah got that on the shoulder, and it made him jump.

Ginger followed it up with the plate, and this took Josiah on the chest.

Having now got his hand in, that coon was settled right down to business.

A pair of rubbers followed the shoes, and both of them rubbed up against the Old Man's cheek.

Next came a bootjack, but that carromed against the looking glass.

A cake of soap was the next thing to slide off the Old Man's head.

The dressing table was convenient to his hand just now, the Old Man having changed his quarters, and Ginger took advantage of it.

The poor Old Man was now cowering in a corner, while Ginger began to pelt him with all sorts of things.

The first was a big sponge, full of water.

Splash!

Josiah got that right in the ear.

"Ow! don't," he howled.

Then came a pair of slippers, which took him in the stomach.

"How yo' like dat, h'm?" growled Mr. Jones.

"Oh, save me, save me!" gasped that wretched Old Man.

A box of prepared burned cork now plastered itself on his nose.

A shoe brush followed it up, and a box of blacking succeeded that.

"Yo' will 'buse me, will yer?" demanded the mad coon.

"Oh, dear!" sighed the Old Man.

Then a whisk broom whisked through the air and took him in the jaw.

"Oh, dear, why don't somebody come?"

"I got yer now jus' whar I want yer," muttered Ginger.

Then followed a box of powder, which hit the Old Man like a shot.

"Will call me names an' knock me 'bout an' frow tings at me, will yer?" demanded the mope.

"Oh, Lord, what shall I do?" groaned the Old Man, trying to squeeze himself into a corner.

"I got yo' dis time, an' I se gwine ter make yer sorry, I is."

A box of cold cream now went hurtling through the air.

The Old Man got it hot, right in the teeth.

A hand glass chased it up, but the Old Man didn't get hit.

There were not many more things that the angry coon could throw after that.

"Yo' bet I make yo' tired," he growled, the jig juice beginning to get in its fine work.

A candle and a stick of cosmetic sailed in company and landed on Josiah's bald head.

The next thing that Ginger picked up was a big, overgrown razor.

"Now I se gwine ter kyarve yo' inter lilly pieces," he growled, going for the Old Man.

Here was where that frightened old gent drew the line.

## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Ginger Jones started for the Old Man, a big razor in his fist, Mr. Burwick thought that it was time for him to leave.

The razor was nothing but a fake and could not even cut cheese, but neither the Old Man nor Ginger knew that.

It was the coon's national weapon, and as soon as he caught sight of it lying on the shelf he went for it.

It was only a property razor that had been left there, but Ginger thought it was all right.

So did Josiah, and when he saw it in Ginger's hand he concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and that it was time for him to get a move on him.

Then for the first time he saw, what he had not before noticed, that the dressing-room door was open.

It was nearer to him than to Ginger, moreover, and he would not have to pass the coon to reach it.

He made a break for it and dashed out at fine speed.

Ginger followed, and the Old Man wasn't so very far ahead after all.

Josiah did not look to see where he was going, but went, the idea most prominent in his mind being the getting away from the coon.

Consequently, what must that perplexed and frightened old party do but make straight for the stage?

The curtain was up, and the phenomenal tenor with the high C was singing a ballad.

Suddenly there appeared at the prompt entrance, which is the one nearest the footlights, an old man dressed in a pair of socks, drawers and a shirt, and with one half of his face black and the other half white.

He was in a hurry too, and the way he hooed it across that big stage beat the record.

He was closely followed by a real, genuine no-cork nig, with a big razor in his hand and blood in his eye.

The old fellow was Josiah, and the coon was Ginger Jones.

They were not before that audience much longer than would be required to take their pictures, but the house got on to them all the same.

You'd better believe that there was a howl when they ran across the stage.

Josiah didn't know that he was going on the stage until he got there, and then it was too late.

He could not go back, for there was that angry coon behind him.

All he could do was to make tracks as rapidly as possible.

It so happened that Shorty was in the opposite entrance when the Old Man made his sudden appearance.

The situation dawned upon him with the rapidity of snap-shot photography.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he ejaculated. "Dat coon must have been going for pop red-hot."

The little runt got out of the Old Man's way just in time, and then he laid for Ginger.

When that raving coon reached the entrance, Shorty suddenly put out his foot.

Over went Mr. Jones all in a heap, and then he slid three or four yards on his nose.

Meanwhile the audience was yelling itself hoarse and asking for more.

Josiah had fetched up against the wall, and then sat down very suddenly all out of breath.

"Save me—save me!" he gasped.

Shorty beckoned to a stage hand and told him to hustle the Old Man back to his dressing-room before the coon saw him.

The audience was still crying for more, and laughing to split.

Shorty stepped out on the stage, did two or three steps of a clog dance, and said:

"Fust, last and only appearance of der wild man of Kentucky and his pet coon. Give der ballad singer a chance."

Then the crowd stopped laughing, Shorty left the stage, and the high C tenor went on with his music.

Ginger Jones began to realize what he had done by this time, and he felt very much ashamed.

He also had an idea that he would get the bounce, and he kept out of the Old Man's way, sneaking home to the hotel and going at once to bed.

Shorty and the Kid called on the Old Man in his dressing-room, and expressed the greatest sorrow for what had happened, though all the time they were laughing in their sleeves at the racket.

"It's just an outrage," sputtered the Old Man, who had now resumed his dressing.

"So it is, pop," said Shorty.

"It's a shame, so it is," echoed the Kid.

"The idea of that miserable nigger presuming to treat me in that way."

"Terrible, ain't it, pop?"

"I wouldn't stand it, granddad."

"Making me run across the stage in my shirt!" muttered Josiah.

"That was the worst of it."

"Putty bad, that was, pop."

"Yes, we draw der line at dat."

"I won't have him in my employ another minute. I'll discharge him this very night."

"Yes, dat's der talk, and get a Chinaman."

"I won't get anybody. I'll give up having a footman, and go to boarding, and I'm going straight home to New York."

"Well, I don't know but you'd better, pop," said Shorty.

"Yes, and don't have any coon to wait on you, neither," said the Kid.

Josiah was disposed to be obstinate when the boys sided with him, however.

"Oh, you want to get rid of me, do you?" he

grunted. "You don't want me to see anything?"

"No, you make us tired."

"Go on home, you old duffer."

"Der show kin get on without yer."

"You only keep us from enjoying ourselves."

"You don't need no valet anyhow."

"Course you don't, you're a regular baby, you are."

The Old Man did not like this sort of talk for a cent; in fact, it made him very mad.

"You're a couple of jealous chumps," he snorted, "and I'm going to stay with the show just as long as it's on the road, and I'll take Ginger back to-morrow and get two or three more men to wait on me besides."

"Yer can't trust dat coon, grandpop," said Charlie, "an' if I was you, I'd fire him out der fust thing."

"I can trust him better than I can you," retorted Josiah, hotly. "I don't believe it was his fault at all to-night. I just believe you put him up to it and got him tight on purpose."

"Oh, yes, pitch into us," said Shorty, "but if yer knowed what ter do, you'd give dat coon der bounce directly."

"Ah, come on, Gawge," said the Kid. "Grandpop's an old stuff, and der ain't no use talkin' to him. If he went home we'd have a good time."

Then those two little rascals skipped out, for they were in for an act about this time, and their furlough was nearly up.

The Old Man did not go home that trip, and neither did he fire Ginger.

The coon did not show up at all the next day, but in the evening Josiah found him and said:

"You black rascal, where have you been all day?"

"Ise been very sick, sah," said Ginger. "Tought one time I was goin' ter die fo' sho', and dey did n' nobody come a neah me. Did n' t'ink yo'd let Ginger die wifout comin' to see um, sah."

"Well, why didn't you send for me?" cried the Old Man. "Let you die without going to see you, Ginger! Of course not. What makes you think I would be so hard-hearted as that. Of course I'd go and see you die. I would be glad to do it."

"H'm!" muttered Ginger. "Glad to see me die, sah?"

"No, no, I don't mean that, of course; I mean that I'd be glad to be with you at the last if you were going to die, but you ain't, because I want you with me, to keep those two bad boys, George and Charlie, from playing jokes on me."

"Yas'r, I do dat," muttered the coon, but he was very glad when Josiah dropped the subject and told him to get ready to go around to the theater."

That night the programme was a dandy one, for Shorty was going to stay only another week in Cincinnati, and he wanted people to feel sorry that he was going, and to ask him to come again.

"I say, pop," he asked, after the preliminaries had been gone through with, "what's der reason dat a blind mule can't see?"

"Why, that's very easy, George," replied Josiah, swelling up and looking dignified.

"Well, why don't yer answer it den, if it's so easy, pop?"

"What's the reason that a blind mule can't see?"

"Dat's what I said, gov'nor."

"Why, any fool knows that."

"Yes, but you don't seem ter, pop."

"What's the reason a blind mule cannot see?"

"Dat's der proposition before der meetin'-house, pop."

"Why, because he's blind, of course."

"No, sir; dat ain't der reason."

"Well, sir, will you be so kind as to tell me, then, why a blind mule can't see?"

"Because he's out ob sees in, of course."

"Take me back to home and mother," remarked Josiah.

"Ah, go on," said the Kid. "Can't yer get along without yer mudder at your age, you old baby? You make me weary, you do."

"That's a song, sir, and you must not interrupt."

"Oh, it's a song, hey?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you going to sing it?"

"No, sir; I am not going to sing it."

"Cause if you was I was goin' to ax you if I could go out. I've got the nose blood or der teeth-aches or suffin' or noder."

"Nonsense, sir! there is nothing the matter with you."

"Yes, dere is, honest."

"Why, sir, what can possibly be the matter with you?"

"Why, every time I get up, I'm sure ter sit down again."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and every time I sit down, I get up again."

"Is there anything else the matter with you?"

"Yes, every time I open my mouth, suffin' gets in it."

"Dat's gin," chuckled Shorty; "I know what it is."

"I'll give yer a slap in der jaw if yo' don't shut up," growled the Kid, looking very mad.

"Yo' ain' got no call ter say nuffin', yo' habn't, yo' little runt."

"Ain' a little runt, no mo'n yo' is," retorted Shorty, and everybody howled.

"Here, here, I can't allow this," cried the Old Man, "Mr. Johnson is going to sing, and you mustn't interrupt."

"He's going ter Sing Sing, yer mean, pop. I got a warrant out for him."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I are."

"Why, what has he been doing?"

"Been taking high notes all der week, and he's going to take some now."

When Mr. Johnson had finished warbling the Kid rattled the tambourine, and said:

"Did yer never hear me sing a ballad, pop?"

"No, I never did."

"Well yer don't want ter."

"I don't think I do."

"Ah, you're jealous. Maybe you don't think I can sing."

"I have never had any reason to suppose that you could, sir."

"Well, kin you tell me what's the difference between—"

"Between him and a chump," put in Shorty. "Dere ain't no diff, pop."

"I'll broke yer jaw if yo' don't shut up," muttered Charlie. "I had a good one dat time and yo' made me fo'got it."

"Well, you got off a good ting de oder day, didn't yer?"

"Ah, go on! Yer going ter say I got off me shirt. Dat's old, dat is."

"No, I was goin' to say yer got off yer seal skin overcoat, got it off der shelf at der hock shop. Dat was a good ting, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but you can't get yours out this winter, you can't."

"Why can't I?"

"Cause you gave away der ticket."

"What did I give it away for?"

"Because you never was known to keep der pledge, you wasn't."

When the audience had gotten over laughing at this sally, the Kid gave them something in the shape of a comic refrain, not too comic, but just sufficiently so.

"There are many things we do that violate propriety, Like waddling home at night in a state of inebriety, Or uttering objurgations when some beardless youth refractory.

Puffs cigarette effluvia across our tired olfactory; Or when some heartless landlord, in a manner reprehensible,

Insists upon our paying with a cheek quite indefensible;

But although these things are dreadful, they're within our comprehension,

Far more so than some others to which I'll call attention.

"It's really not so bad to tell legends piscatorial, Or act when sitting on a tack in manner saltatorial; There is really no occasion for resorting to profanity When a fellow asks: 'Is't cold enough?', that's only his insanity,

And it isn't worth while getting mad, although that's problematical,

When a literary pirate purloins your goods theatrical;

But the biggest malefactor that ever yet was born Is the idiotic, blundering chump who treads upon your corns."

"Little moss rosebuds twine 'round the door," remarked the Old Man in a pathetic tone, winking at the female impersonator on his left.

"Yes, dey do—like fun," snickered that irrepressible Kid. "Skunk cabbage and pig-weed, you mean, don't yer, grandpop?"

"Be quiet, sir," said Mr. Burwick, with a frown. "This is a very pretty song, and you mustn't interrupt."

"Let her go, grandpop. Roses come high dis time o' year, but it's your funeral, so if you must have 'em, it ain't my lookout."

The programme proceeded, and everything in it was good, and at the end of the first part

Shorty played an unpremeditated gag upon the Kid, just for the fun of the thing.

The first part concluded with a grand comic finale, entitled "Scenes in the Circus," with the Old Man as ringmaster, Shorty and the Kid as clowns, the Shorty kids as tumblers and the rest of the company as attendants, spectators, the band, et cetera.

Shorty and the Kid held up paper hoops for the boys to jump through, and also brought in chairs and tables for them to fall over in a manner very much unlike the way they do things in real circuses, the whole thing being a howling burlesque from start to finish.

Then Shorty ran out and presently came in with a small hoop in his hand and told the Kid to jump through it.

Charley thought the thing was all right and dove at it head first.

The thing was a round piece of sheet iron used for putting under a stove, and Shorty, finding it in the store-room had hastily covered it with white paper.

Charlie banged his head against it full tilt and the thing rattled like stage thunder.

Down sat the Kid on the floor, rubbing his head and looking all sorts of strange things at Shorty, who rolled the big sheet of iron all around the stage like a hoop and finally ran off at the entrance.

"I'll have to soak pop for that," remarked the Kid when the curtain went down. "He's getting funny again, he is. Said he wouldn't play no kids or cads on me and then goes right on and does 'em. All right for you, Gawgy. I'm going to get hunk for that little crack on the cocoanut."

Later on Charlie got the very chance he wanted, and it was all in the way of business, too, which made it all the funnier.

He and George were in the nigger sketch rearranged from the old farce of "Monsieur Toussaint" and called "Mr. Johnson" on this trip.

The Old Man was the poor fellow whom the two bad boys of the piece worked all sorts of snaps on, ringing his bell, asking for Mr. Johnson, throwing bricks at his window and doing all sorts of naughty things.

The Old Man looked very funny in a big red nightcap as he stuck his head out of the practical window in the flat, and scolded at the bad boys who annoyed him.

He stood on a platform behind the scenes and had all the properties he used arranged on a table beside him.

One of these was a pail filled with sawdust, which he was to empty upon Shorty's head when the latter went to ring the bell for the fourth or fifth time.

"Well, having the idea of revenge in his mind, the Kid, just before the sketch was put on, skipped up and put something besides a pail of sawdust on the table.

Then the farce began, and was very funny, the old man being especially good.

At last, and for the wind up, the Kid says to Shorty:

"Say, McKinley, let's hab one mo' joke on de ole man befo' we goes home."

"A' right, Mistah Carlisle, wha' yo' gwine ter do?" asks Shorty.

"Go up dere an' ring de bell and tol' um dat it wasn' Mistah Johnsing yo' wanted, but Mistah Jeff'son, an' dat you am berry sorry yo' sturb'd him befo'."

"Yah—yah, dat am a good one. Specs he be mad as de debbil when I tol' him dat, hey?"

"Co'se he will. Yah—yah, oh my!"

Then up goes Shorty and begins to ring the bell like all possessed.

The Old Man is waiting for his cue, and now he grabs up the pail, shoves up the window, and lets Shorty have it.

It was not sawdust that Shorty got, however. It was water, and a big pail full of it besides. He knew the difference if the Old Man did not.

Down he went, as wet as a drowned rat, and very much surprised as well.

The audience thought it was all right, and shook their sides with laughing when the scene was closed in.

When Shorty got his breath he was sitting in the middle of the stage, with Charlie looking at him very sympathizingly.

At first the Kid was going to acknowledge the corn and cry quits, but something that Shorty said induced him to change that bill of conduct for another and most decidedly better one.

"Der Old Man is gettin' awfully funny," said the drowned runt. "Guess he thinks I've been playing in tank dramas and dat I wouldn't mind getting soaked."

"Oh, he knows you get soaked, Dad," laughed the Kid. "I've seen you try to open a door with a buttonhook myself."

"It looks funnier to throw a bucket o' water on a feller, stead of a pail o' bran, but I didn't suppose dat old duffer would think of it."

"No, yer might have fetched yer umbrella if yer had," laughed the Kid.

He tumbled to the fact that Shorty suspected the Old Man of playing the trick on him and he did not let Shorty know any different.

"Dad will want to make a date with Grandpop after that," he thought to himself, "and then there'll be more fun. Guess I won't say nuthin' just now."

and he at once began to think up a return snap.

Charlie might have put things straight, but he never said a word, preferring to let some other fellow do the talking.

"Grandpop doesn't know but what it was all right to chuck that pail of water," he chuckled, "and dad thinks the Old Man done it and there's going to be some fun."

"The governor is getting funny," remarked Shorty, to himself. "Who'd ever supposed he'd think o' that snap? Well, I gotter give him another one to pay for it, that's all."

Having settled in his mind that there was going to be some fun, that jolly Kid concluded

don't step on them right, but Shorty did not know that, his snap on the Old Man being of another sort.

In came Shorty with the Kid, having a discussion.

"Dat am de place I tol' yer," said Charlie.

"No, it amn't. Yo' am mistooken sah, bery much."

"Tol' yo' I ain'. Yo' jess go up an' brace de man wha' libes dere."

Shorty went up those steps, got to the top and suddenly slid down to the bottom.

Josiah then appeared at the top with a grin on his face.



Suddenly there appeared at the prompt entrance, which is the one nearest the footlights, an old man dressed in a pair of socks, drawers and a shirt, and with one half of his face black and the other half white.

"Mighty funny old bloke pop is," said Shorty. "You and me wants to look out for ourselves now, or he'll get the best of us."

"Right you are, dad," said that bad Kid, as he went off to his dressing room.

As Shorty was leaving the stage he met the Old Man, who had just come down from aloft.

"Why, bless me, George, how wet you are!" cried Josiah in unfeigned astonishment.

"Oh, yes. You don't know how I got dat way, do you, pop?" laughed George.

"Of course not. Is it raining outside?"

"How about dat pail o' water you dumped on me, pop?"

"Pail of water!" echoed the Old Man.

"Cert."

"I didn't throw a pail of water on you, George. It was sawdust."

"That won't do, pop," and Shorty walked off, when a word or two would have convinced him of the old gentleman's innocence and have put the credit of that little snap just where it belonged.

that he might as well have some himself and so make things all the more lively.

"I know what I'll do," he mused. "Pop thinks grandpop played roots on him. Well, I'll soak dad again and make him think the Old Man did it. That'll stir things up, sure enough."

The next day he proceeded to work things up with that end in view, saying nothing to anybody about it.

Shorty put on the old farce of "The Coal Heaver's Revenge," with the intention of rigging the Old Man in return for that bucket of water the night before.

The Old Man was to play the doctor, and George and Charlie were the two bad boys, other characters being taken by the company.

The Kid suspected what Shorty's little game was, and he prepared himself accordingly.

The farce was put on along in the middle of the evening, giving the characters time to dress for it after the first part.

After a song and dance by the three boys, the flats drew apart and disclosed a street scene with a set house at one side, approached by a flight of steps.

These steps were the kind that shut up if you

He thought the thing was regular, but he could not help laughing all the same.

"That's another one pop played on me," thought Shorty. "He put up them trick steps."

"What do you want, boys?" asked the Old Man.

"Dat's de fellah, shu' nuff, ain't it?" whispered Charlie.

"So it am, an' he done put lard on dem steps so's I fall down."

"Say, boss, are yo' got any wo'k fo' a fellah to do?" asked Charlie.

"Why, certainly, you'll find six tons of coal around at the back gate. You can put it in if you like."

"A' right, boss, we do um," said Shorty.

Then the Old Man went on, and Charlie said:

"Yo' know wha' dat snoozer do ef we frow in dat coal?"

"Gib us free dollahs apiece."

"No, he won'. He won' gib us nuffin'. Dat's de way he serbe us de oder time, don' yo' 'member?"

"So he did."

"An' I'se gwine to get eben wif um. Yo' know how?"

## CHAPTER XII.

SHORTY was sure that the Old Man had purposely dumped that bucket of water on him,

"Co'se not."

"I'se gwine ter get dat coal an' break all him windahs."

"Huh, dat am good. Reckon dat fix um fuss rate."

"Come on, den."

Then they skipped out and a great crash was heard outside.

Presently the Old Man came in again, but not down those steps, looking very mad.

He had a big fat club in his hand, and he handled it in a way that meant business.

"There's them bad boys breaking all my windows," he sputtered. "I'll fix them for that, see if I don't."

Shorty had fixed that club, and when the Old Man whacked him with it, it would burst, and Mr. Josiah would get a lot of flour in his face.

That's what Shorty thought was going to happen, but it did not.

The Kid had changed clubs, and this one had a brick in the end of it.

The Old Man stole up behind Shorty when he was doubled up and let him have a good one right in the stern sheets.

Jerusalem!

Shorty slid six feet on his nose and thought that a mule had kicked him.

When he got up, the scene was closed in and

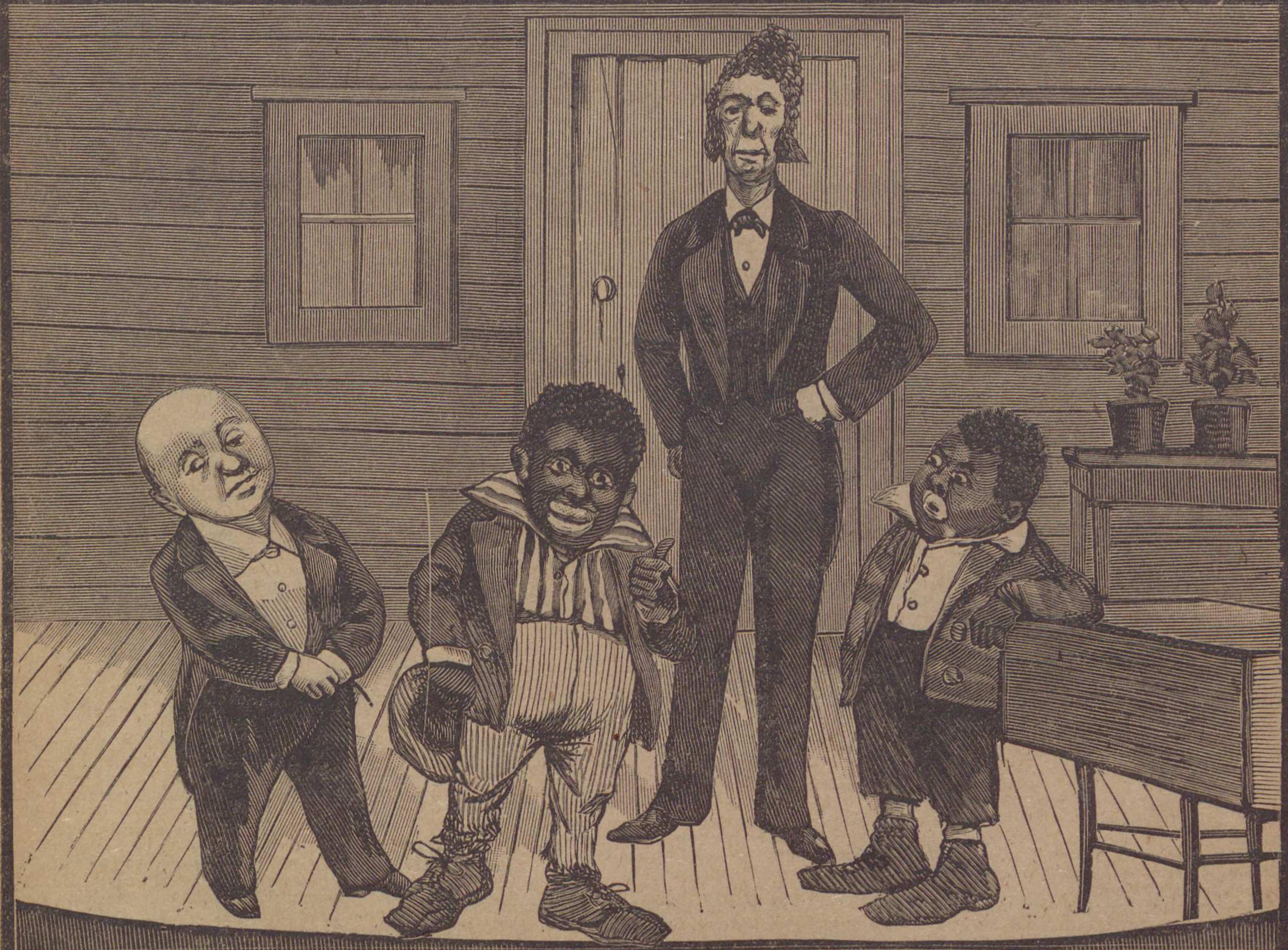
ready in his collection, and he was on the look out for more.

Shorty thought it was about time to work off that return snap on his dad, and Chicago was as good a place as any and Christmas Eve the best time in the world.

On the morning of the day before Christmas the Old Man received a letter which threw him into a fever of excitement.

It was signed by no less a name than that of the boss explorer and Nile source hunter, Mr. Henry M. Stanley.

Of course, the Old Man was excited over it. Just think of the honor of getting a letter



Josiah put his hand on his heart, advanced a step, smiled and said: "I am deeply touched, my friends, at this manifestation of your regard for me, and your appreciation of the great honor done me by my friend Stanley." "Open the box!" howled the crowd.

Then he stepped behind a tree, and the two bad boys came in again, laughing at a great rate.

"Am dat de way ter get even on him?"

"Specs it am, Jeems. Yah-yah, how mad he get."

"Reckon he pay us fo' de nex' coal we put in fo' him."

"Oh, Lor', yas. Oho, dat was the funniest ting I eber done."

Then Shorty began to laugh as if he really meant it.

He doubled up, straightened out again, slapped his leg with his hands, and doubled up again, laughing all the time.

He had the middle of the stage, the Kid was on the right, and the Old Man was on the left behind a tree.

"Yah-yah, dat was de bes' ting I ever see," he roared, shaking himself.

Then out stepped the Old Man with the club. The Kid saw him, but Shorty did not.

The latter was still laughing, being all doubled up with mirth, his back to the Old Man.

The thing for the latter to do was to beat Shorty with the stuffed club.

the Old Man was leaving the stage with a big grin on his face.

"Well!" muttered Gawge, "I reckon pop is gettin' too funny for me. Dat's two I owe him now."

The Cincinnati engagement closed a day or so after this, and the show went to Chicago for a solid month or longer, beginning with Christmas week.

The Shortys were prime favorites in the breezy city, and were sure to draw good houses, as Shanks well knew when he made the date.

They opened to smashing big business, and the promise was that it would keep up during the run, for the little jokers had lots of friends in the city, and so did the Old Man.

The latter had lately been developing as a crank of the worst sort; to wit: a collector, his specialty being rare specimens in the line of natural history.

He had already shipped on to New York enough stuff to stock a three-story dime museum, and there was more to come.

Six-legged cats, red-white-and-blue mice, hammer-headed beetles, flying squirrels, fan-tailed raccoons, and all sorts of queer objects were al-

from the great African tramp and cannibal walopper, Mr. Stanley!

You'd think it mighty fine yourself, wouldn't you?

At all events, Stanley's name was signed to the letter, and that was enough.

It was somewhat in this style:

"NEW YORK, Dec. 20.

"MY VERY ESTEEMED FRIEND.—It gives me superabundant pleasure to assist such a well-known collector as yourself, and I therefore send with this a very rare and valuable specimen of the rarest bird found in equatorial Africa, the 'hennipenni-altitudinus-vulgaris,' knowing that you will be pleased to have one in your collection. Full directions for the care of this valuable and most delicate bird will be found on the box."

"Yours to command, STANLEY."

"Well!" exclaimed the Old Man when he had swallowed the letter, "I think I'm somebody after all."

He lost no time in finding Shorty and the Kid and then showed them the letter and said:

"There now! maybe you boys think my natural history researches amount to something now? Maybe you'll make fun of me after this?"

"That's great, pop," said Shorty. "Where is der bird?"

"It has not arrived yet, George, or possibly it may be at the express office."

"Let's go down and see," said the Kid. "If der thing is delicate yer don't want to leave it in no express office."

"I tell you what let's do, pop," cried Shorty. "Let's have a presentation on der stage tonight."

"Do you think Mr. Stanley would like it, George?"

"Cert'nly he would, and he'd be here if he could, but he's got engagements."

"Why, I know Stanley," put in Charlie. "He'd come sure, pop, if he could. Go on, have der presentation."

"Well, if Mr. Shanks thinks it would be a good thing, and if Mr. Stanley doesn't mind," said Josiah, hesitatingly, "perhaps it would be a good idea."

"Of course it would, pop, and I tell yer, Stanley would be just der boy ter have it dat way. Ain't him and me pals, and doesn't he know you, the biggest collector in de country? 'Course he does."

At this juncture, though quite by accident, Shanks happened along, and the matter was referred to him.

Shanks had an eye to business every time, and he at once declared that the proper thing to do was to have the presentation on the stage.

The astute manager knew that there would be a big house were Stanley's name mentioned in advance, and he meant that it would be, knowing more ways than one by which to spread the news.

"Of course you must have the presentation on the stage," he said, "and read Stanley's letter and all. I wish he could be here, but I suppose that is impossible."

"I never dreamed of such a thing," gasped Josiah. "That would be too much honor."

"He can't come anyhow," said Shanks, "for he is away out West, or East, or somewhere tonight. I remember reading something about it in the papers."

"I only wish the bird were here," sighed Mr. Burwick. "I'd give anything for a private peep of it in advance."

"Wish yer might, pop, but if it had come, expressmen would have sent it up by this time."

"Let's go and see, George. I am really afraid that something may happen to it, and I wouldn't have that occur for the world."

"I'll go to the principal express offices and inquire, Mr. Burwick," suggested Shanks.

"I wish you would," muttered the Old Man. "You don't know anxious I am about it. This is really the event of my life, and you don't know—you can't know—how nervous I am at this moment."

"Keep your shoes on, pop," laughed Shorty. "Der thing'll come all right—don't you be scared."

"Why, certainly it will," added the Kid. "When Hank Stanley says he'll do a thing, yer can bet yer life he'll do it."

However, the Old Man was not satisfied till Shanks had assured him that he would look the thing up and had actually started off on his search.

That long-legged manager raced all over the city of Chicago, but he did not find the express package all the same.

At any rate, he manged to let people know that there would be a big surprise at the theater that night, and that it would be worth while for people to be present.

It was not very surprising that he did not find the box sent by Stanley, however, seeing that Shorty had it all the time.

The little runt hung on to it also, and it did not appear until just before the curtain went up.

Mr. Burwick was informed of its arrival as he was putting on the finishing touches to his make-up, and his relief may be imagined.

"When did it come, George?" asked that nervous Old Man.

"Just now, pop. It came to the theater."

"Can't I look at it, George?"

"Ain't got time, pop. Der box is covered all over."

"There must be a hole for the bird to breathe through, George?"

"Cert, but yer can't see nothin' I tell yer. Hurry up and get ready. Der show'll begin in two minutes."

There was a rattling big crowd in the immense theater, and all hands were anxious to see what the surprise would be.

Josiah managed to get through the first part,

though he never knew how, he was so nervous and excited.

Why wouldn't he be nervous and excited when he was about to receive a Christmas present from the great Stanley?

Of course he would be, and so he was.

The first part was over at last, and down went the curtain.

"Hurry up, pop," said Shorty. "Slip into your dressing-room, take off der cork and be ready when I give der word. Shanksy is going ter say suthin' to der crowd so's ter kind o' let 'em know what's coming, don't yer know?"

Josiah could never have got the cork off his face that night if he had been left to himself, he was that shaky.

However, Ginger Jones was there, and he removed it in a jiffy.

Shanks went in front of the curtain, and said:

"Ladies and gentleman, it gives me great pleasure to inform you that Mr. Henry M. Stanley, the greatest living explorer, has presented Mr. Burwick with a rare specimen of African ornithology, knowing his reputation as a collector and desiring to show his appreciation of services formerly rendered him by our esteemed friend."

Of course there was a storm of applause after this, for Stanley was almost as big a card as the Shortys themselves.

"Knowing the esteem in which you all hold Mr. Burwick," continued Shanks, "we have concluded that it would be highly proper, the box containing Mr. Stanley's present having only just arrived, to make the presentation here on the stage, and let you all see the wonderful bird brought from the heart of Africa by Mr. Stanley, and now to be presented to our old friend, Mr. Josiah Burwick, the father of all the Shortys, the progenitor of a race of fun-makers."

There was a lot more applause at this, and now the curtain rolled up and Josiah Burwick, in white face and evening dress, came forward.

He was followed by Shorty and the Kid, and then by two supers carrying a big box covered with a cloth, which they placed upon a stand at one side of the stage.

Then there was some more noise, and all hands had to bow.

Shorty came down to the footlights, the Kid on one side, Shanks on the other, and the Old Man alongside.

"Ladies and gents," said the comical little runt, "dis is my pop, good old pop! You all know me, to be course."

"Bet yer life!" sang out the gallery.

"My pop's going ter get a present, and dere it is in der box."

"This here is a bird, and Stanley sent it to my pop. It's a very particular bird, and I'll read yer what Stanley says about it."

Thereupon Shorty took out a long roll of paper and began to read:

"This is a specimen of the hennipenni-cockalorum-longlegiansis-stupendous Africanus."

"Keep dry and use no hooks, for he is a very delicate creature."

"Do not feed him on brickbats, tomato cans or nutmeg graters, for his appetite is very sensitive."

"Never let him go out in the rain without his umbrella, overshoes, waterproof and muffler, for he is extremely sensitive to heat or cold."

"Don't give him more than sixteen meals a day or you might overfeed him, and he is pretty fat as it is."

"Don't let him die by any means, for you won't get another one like him in six thousand years."

The audience began to catch on and scent a gag, but neither the Old Man nor Shanks had any idea of taking a tumble.

"How very extraordinary," muttered the Old Man.

"I wonder how much of all that Shorty made up," thought Shanks.

"Speech—speeeh!" yelled the crowd.

Josiah put his hand on his heart, advanced a step, smiled and said:

"I am deeply touched, my friends, at this manifestation of your regard for me, and your appreciation of the great honor done me by my friend Stanley."

"Open the box!" howled the crowd.

"That's all Hank says," said Shorty, "and you'll know that this ain't no slouch of a bird."

"Open the box!" came from all parts of the house.

"All right, Petey, let her go," remarked Shorty.

Then he stepped across the stage, and took the cloth off the box.

### CHAPTER XIII.

SHORTY took the cloth off the box containing Mr. Stanley's wonderful present.

Well, if you called that thing a bird, it was certainly the funniest-looking one you ever saw.

It had a big head, a very long body, four very short legs and a stump of a tail.

In fact it was no more nor less than a brown dog with a big head and short legs.

"Here's yer bird, pop," laughed Shorty.

"Ain't he a bute, gov'nor?" asked the Kid.

The Old Man looked disgusted, Shanks seemed puzzled and the crowd howled.

"Those boys have brought in the wrong box," muttered Shanks.

"Keep him dry, pop," chuckled Shorty.

"Use no hooks," added Charlie.

Josiah began to look mad, for the audience was shrieking with delight.

Then Shorty opened the box, and the dog jumped out and made a bolt for the Old Man.

This was a little more than that ancient party could stand.

He gave one howl, took to his heels and got away as fast as he could skip.

The dog followed, and Shorty and the Kid took after the dog, while two supers lugged away the box.

"Well, those two jokers are really too bad," muttered Shanks. "I wonder what they did with the bird?"

Even Shanks did not tumble to the snap yet.

He did tumble to the fact that the whole house was laughing at him, however, and he dusted as a lot of song and dance men rushed on and began to do their great act.

Josiah escaped from the dog, which Shorty and the Kid collared and hustled out of the way, and then he looked around for those two jokers.

"The idea of their bringing that thing on," he sputtered, as he went to his room. "They made a regular fool of me. I wonder what they did with the bird. I'd really like to see it."

When he reached his room he heard Shorty and Charlie laughing in the room next to him, and from their conversation he realized just how he had been sold.

There was no bird, no Stanley, no nothing, just a plain sell, by those two comical runts.

Of course he was disgusted, not to say mad.

"That settles it!" he said with a grunt. "I'll go home to-morrow."

When he reached the hotel he told his wife of his decision.

"Go home on Christmas!" ejaculated Angie.

"Travel all day on a holiday! Well, I guess not."

"Ah, pop, what's the matter with you?" cried Cal. "Don't you want me to have any fun at all? Whoever heard of spending Christmas on the cars? It's too mean, and I won't do it."

"California!" said Josiah, sternly.

"I wish you wouldn't call the boy by that ridiculous name," said Angie. "Cal will do very well, but California is simply absurd."

"Yes, you might as well call me New York or South Carolina," put in Cal. "Why didn't you, pop?"

"Because my early days were not spent in those States," answered the practical old duffer. "I named you California because—"

"Because you didn't know any better," interrupted Angie. "Cal, go to bed. We are not going to New York."

"Hooray!" yelled the young scamp, rushing off.

"Angelina," said the old man, "I do not like you to dispute my wishes before that boy. It weakens my authority over him."

"Don't be absurd," was Mrs. Josiah's only answer.

"And, moreover, we are going to New York to-morrow, Christmas or no Christmas."

"You can go if you like," said Angie. "I am going to stay in Chicago."

Moreover, she did stay there and so did the old man.

He sputtered and scolded and blowed for a time, but it had no effect, for Angie left him sputtering and went off to gossip with the other ladies.

"It's really too bad," muttered the old man, "that I can't have my way in anything. I suppose Ginger Jones will be setting himself up against me next. Seems to me I don't amount to anything these days."

He was too mad then to think of playing a racket on Shorty and the Kid, but it did occur to him, the next day, that it might be worth while.

"I'll just soak it to those jokers," he mused, and make them tired, once for all, of playing jokes on me whenever they see fit."

There was a matinee that day and it was upon this occasion that the Old Man got off his little gag on Shorty and the Kid.

Shorty had put on the farce of "The Rival Lovers," in which he and the Kid played the amorous coons, the Old Man was the girl's father, the Shorty Kids were three mischievous monkeys and the female impersonator was the black Venus.

It opened with the lovely Clementina getting her dad out of the house on a wild goose chase so that she could spend the evening with Sassa-

tain meal, but it held something quite different.

As a matter of fact, Josiah had hired some of the stage hands to put an old bath tub full of water in that box, and before he knew it, Charlie went sousing into it.

The audience took it for a part of the piece, and laughed, but Charlie did not find it so funny.

He jumped out as suddenly as he went in, and just then in came the Old Man.

At the same time Shorty came up from below looking like a drowned rat.

He saw the Kid, and burst out laughing.

Shorty and the Kid were even with him after all, and he had intended to make them tired of working off rackets on him.

Those two runts guyed him like the dickens after the show, and he had to stand it, for when he threatened to go home they just laughed.

"We thought yer wanted a bath, pop," chuckled Shorty.

"What's sauce for us ain't sauce for you, is it, grandpop?" asked Charlie.

"Oh, you go to thunder!" snapped Josiah, stamping away in a rage.

That evening, when he came to the theater, the Old Man found a big packing case standing



Shorty opened the box, and the dog jumped out and made a bolt for the Old Man. This was a little more than that ancient party could stand. He gave one howl, took to his heels and got away as fast as he could skip.

fras Eelpot, her favored lover whom she expected.

Then in came Shorty, and began to make furious love when a tremendous knock upon the door was heard.

Miss Silesia Grosgrain screamed, went into a fit, let down her back hair, kicked over a wash-boiler and otherwise let loose her emotion and finally opened a trap in the stage and bade Shorty hide in the coal cellar till the old gent had gone.

Here was where the Old Man got in his little racket on Shorty.

As that little runt went down the ladder placed under the trap, the Old Man yanked it away and down went Shorty into a barrel of water.

"Here's a pretty business," muttered Shorty, as he got out. "How'm I going on again, all wet like this? Wonder if that fresh Kid did dat?"

Meanwhile the Kid, as Mr. Honeycooler Limburger, the other lover, was wooing the dusky damsel up above for all he was worth, when there came another knock, and the maiden proceeded to hide the Kid.

He was to be put in a box supposed to con-

"Guess dere must ha' been a flood, hey Chawles?" he asked.

"Or dey took us for tank actors, Gawge," answered the Kid.

The Old Man was smiling much more broadly than his part warranted, and those two jolly jokers caught right onto the snap.

Charlie winked at George, and pointed to the bath tub.

Both then suddenly made a dive for Josiah, grabbed him up, and chucked him into the tub in a jiffy.

The Old Man spluttered and yelled, and kicked, but Shorty gave the sceneshifters the wink, and he and the Kid grabbed the blushing maiden and waltzed down to the footlights, while another scene was shoved on.

Then all three did a jig, the two Shortys dripping wet, and the other fellow laughing ready to split.

Ginger Jones got his master out of the tub, and gave him a good rub down and something hot besides, but Josiah was too mad to take cold.

His little snap had worked all right until it kicked and caught him on the recoil, and then it wasn't so funny.

in the middle of the floor in his dressing-room.

"What's this?" he asked Ginger.

"Donno, sah; neber seed it befo', sah," said the coon.

"It's very singular to put a big box like that in one's room," muttered Mr. Burwick, putting on his glasses.

"So it am, sah, bery singulah," assented Ginger.

He wasn't disputing anything that the old gent said nowadays.

"There must have been some reason for it, of course," continued Josiah, walking around the other side of the box and surveying it from another quarter.

"Spec' dey mus' hab been, sah, else de box woun'd be yer," remarked Mr. Jones wisely.

"Aha, I see, why yes, to be sure, this must be the box after all," suddenly exclaimed the Old Man, glancing at the top, which came nearly to his shoulders, so that he did not have to stoop much.

"So it am, it am de bery box," put in Ginger, who had not the slightest idea what he was talking about.

It wouldn't do to argue with the Old Man,

however, and so he agreed with everything the latter said.

"Why, to be sure. Here is a card with my name on it, and here is a label from the express company, and here is—yes, it must be, the mark of the African shipper. I really believe that this is my wonderful bird, after all, the—m m—what-do-you-call-it *Africanus*. Certainly, that's what it is."

"Dey ain' no mistake about it, sah, dat am de bery one," exclaimed Ginger.

"Run and get a hammer, a chisel, a can-opener, no, no, I mean a case-opener, a screw-driver, anything," cried the Old Man, excitedly. "I am dying to see this rare bird. Hurry up, you stupid black blockhead, and don't stand staring like that."

Ginger got an acceleration of motion upon him very shortly when his boss began to speak like that.

He dusted out so suddenly, in fact, that he nearly upset the Old Man, and ran smash bang into one of the stage hands who happened to be passing the door.

When he returned he brought a big sledge hammer, an overgrown screw driver, a chisel, a tack lifter, a patent nail extractor, a saw, a center bit, a plane, a drawing knife and a small tool chest.

"Heah yo' is, sah," he exclaimed, depositing his small carpenter shop on the top of the box.

"Well, well; bless my heart, you need not have brought all those things," muttered Josiah, "and you'll have to take them off the box, they're in the way there, you half-baked idiot."

Ginger hustled those things off that box in a jiffy when the Old Man took that tone, you bet.

In fact, he hustled them so quickly, that he came within one of dropping the big hammer on Mr. Burwick's bunions, and did, in point of fact, tickle his ribs with the saw.

"Now then, look sharp, you pudding-head!" yelled Josiah. "What are you doing? Can't you see what you are about? Here, give me that thing, you black jackass."

That thing was the patent case opener, and Josiah took it and tried to use it.

He was a little too short, however, and he had to give it up.

"Bring me a chair or a box—something to stand on," he sputtered, getting mad again. "Haven't you any sense at all, you smoked dromedary?"

"Yes, sah, no, sah—heah yo' is, sah—dis am de ting, sah," sputtered that rattled coon, fetching a chair from a corner.

Of course that was the very chair of all that he should not have brought.

It had been placed on the sick list, and was stuck away in the most remote corner, so that no one would use it.

That was probably the reason why Mr. Ginger picked it out from half a dozen, any of which was nearer to hand than it was.

He stood it alongside the box, and then assisted the Old Man to mount.

Josiah gave just one yank with that patent machine of his, when smash went that chair, falling apart like a moldy cheese.

The nail embezzler went one way and Josiah the other, coming down solidly on the biggest part of him with a thud, not a dull, sickening one, but just a plain every-day thud, something like the sound of dropping a rotten apple from the gallery upon the bald head of a man in the orchestra.

"Oof!" remarked Josiah, when he sat down.

That was about all he could say, his crockery corn-crushers having been jolted out of his mouth.

If he had had them in he would probably have said a good deal more, and it would have shocked polite ears also, for my estimable old friend, Mr. Burwick, is a rattler when he gets his mad up.

However, Ginger recovered his teeth for him, scolded the manager of the theater for being so careless, and then hustled around and brought a chair upon which three men of Josiah's build could have stood at one time with perfect safety.

Being fixed at last, the Old Man got to work and yanked the nails out of that box one after the other.

When he took the last one out, Ginger standing alongside holding on to the chair to keep it from tipping, up flew the lid with a bounce.

Out popped a big rooster's head with a card tied around its neck, and began to crow like one o'clock.

"Bless me!" ejaculated Josiah, jumping backwards.

Ginger did the same thing, and over went

chair, coon, the father of the Shortys, and the whole business.

When the Old Man got upon his feet after the wreck, there was that rooster's head and neck sticking out of the top of the box, as straight as a ramrod, but not a sound did the bird utter.

"Wow! Dat am de bigges' roostah I eber see!" exclaimed Ginger. "Reckon dat am de reg'lar Shanghae breed."

The bird's head was nearly as big as Ginger's, and his neck was two or three feet long, his comb being a good six inches in height.

There he was, however, perfectly motionless, never uttering a sound, never even winking, and Josiah was puzzled.

"It must be a sort of ostrich," he muttered.

"How am I going to get him back in the box? He may be savage. Goodness gracious, I wish I hadn't opened the box myself."

"What do it say on de kyard, Mistah Burwick?" asked Ginger.

"It says 'Merry Christmas,' but that doesn't tell what sort of a bird it is, you idiot."

"I go get some co'n an' mebby he go inter de box ag'in," muttered Ginger, who was as much frightened as the Old Man was.

Just then a voice was heard outside, the voice of Shorty, asking:

"Hallo, pop, ain't you 'most ready? We're going to ring up in five minutes."

"Bless me, if I hadn't forgotten all about it," gasped Josiah. "Come in here, George, I am in trouble."

In came Shorty made up for the first part.

"That's a bully rooster you got there, pop," he remarked.

"Yes, it's a present, but he doesn't seem to want to go in his box and I'm afraid to touch him and I can't get by to get to my dressing table. What am I going to do, George?"

"I'll fix him for you, pop," said Shorty, and, going up to the box he grabbed that bird by the head, shut him up as you would close an opera hat, put on the box cover stuck in one nail and then skipped out.

Ginger Jones had watched this process, and now he began to laugh immoderately.

"Oho-ha-ha-yah, oh, my. Oh, fo' goodness sake!" he ejaculated. "Well, ef dat amn't de bes' t'ing yet. Well, well, yas, indeedy, dat am de bes' t'ing I eber see."

"What are you laughing at, you born idiot?" snapped Josiah, shying a shoe brush at the laughing coon.

"Dat rooster ain't live 'tall, sah, it amn't no rooster anyhow, it am on'y a make-b'leve rooster juss like a jack in de box wha' de chillens play wif. Oh, my! Neber had so much fun in all my bo'n days."

"Shut up, you gibbering idiot," yelled Josiah, letting fly a bottle of shoe polish at Ginger's head.

If he had wanted to make his mark he should have thrown powdered chalk or condensed milk for putting black stuff on a darky is as superfluous as gilding refined gold and all that sort of business.

However, Ginger did not get hit and the wall did, and the mark was made just the same.

"I show you what I mean, sah," said the coon, skipping over to the box and releasing the nail from the cover.

Up flew that rooster's head as before and crowed like the mischief, remaining perfectly rigid when the crowing was finished.

The thing was nothing but a big mechanical toy, that was all, and Shorty had given it to the Old Man for a Christmas present.

Ginger started in laughing again, and the Old Man chucked a hair brush at him and made him dust out of that in a jiffy.

Then Josiah fixed himself up without that coon's assistance and took his place in the middle just before the curtain went up.

The performance went off in rattling good style, as did everything that Shorty got up and the big audience went away delighted.

The holiday season was a lively one for all hands, for Shorty and the Kid were full of their jokes and rackets; everybody had to be on the lookout.

Josiah was left alone for a time, as he had lately received something more than his share of rackets, and the jokers did not want to give him too big a dose at one time.

The Shorty Kids were up to as much mischief as their capacity for that sort of thing would allow, but they very seldom troubled the elder members of the family for very good and sufficient reasons.

However, they had tackled the old man before now without getting caught, and about this time they concluded to try it on again.

New Years day came around, the show being

still in Chicago, and on this occasion the three kids determined to give Josiah a surprise.

There was a matinee, of course, as it was a holiday, and the old duffer was not in the best of humors on that account.

He thought it bad enough to have to black up and sit in the middle six times a week, and had kicked against matinees on Saturday even, and so when it came to having two mats in a week, and for two successive weeks, he was madder yet.

"Thank goodness there won't be any more holidays until Washington's birthday anyhow," he muttered, as he got into the carriage to drive to the theater, "and that'll be the last of 'em, for we ain't going to keep this thing up all the year, I hope."

"Don' know 'bout dat, sah," put in Ginger. "I done hyar Marse Gawge say dis mo'nin' dat he reckon he take de show plumb roun' de worl' aftah he get ter 'Frisco, sah."

"I won't go around the world!" declared Josiah, explosively. "What do I want to go around the world for, at my time of life? It's all nonsense. I've been around once and it nearly killed me, and I'm certainly not going around again. It's too ridiculous."

"Well, I don' know nuffin' 'bout it, sah," stammered Ginger, getting scared at the Old Man's emphatic manner. "I on'y juss tol' yo' what I heered Marse Gawge say, dat's all, sah."

"George says a great deal more than is necessary," sputtered Josiah, "and you needn't pay any attention to what he does say. I am not going around the world, and that settles it."

Ginger did not say any more, and they presently reached the theater and went in by the stage entrance.

When they arrived in front of the Old Man's dressing room they found the door locked.

Here is where the little surprise fixed up by the boys put in its appearance.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"WHAT'S the matter with this door?" sputtered the Old Man.

"Reckon somebody done locked it," replied Ginger.

"Lock a dressing-room door! Ridiculous! Never heard of such a thing."

"All de same, yo' cyant get it open, sah," returned Ginger, putting his shoulder against the door.

"Well, see if it's locked, then, you great stupid," sputtered Josiah.

"Dey ain' no key in it if it am, sah," answered Ginger.

"Well, then, try the knob, you idiot," snapped the Old Man, who was getting mad by the minute.

"Done toned de knob a'ready, sah," said Ginger, "an' it don' do no good. Reckon de do' am locked."

"Well, then, burst it open. I can't stay out in this cold place all night."

Ginger put his shoulder to the door, when it suddenly flew open, and he went flying into the room all in a heap.

"Bress mah soul, wha' do dat?" he gasped, as he went sprawling.

Then he saw three white figures coming toward him waving their arms and groaning.

It did not take him long to get up after that.

"De Lawd sabe me, look o' dem free ghostses," he yelled, jumping up and making a break.

Josiah was just coming in to see what all the fuss was about.

Ginger fell all over him, and down he sat very suddenly.

"Ugh!" he grunted, while the coon pitched clean over his head and landed on his own three yards away.

"What do you mean by knocking me down like that, you big black fool?" demanded Mr. Burwick, laying about him with his stick.

Ginger was fortunately too far off to get hit.

"Didn' meanter do it, sah, deed I didn', but dem ghostses done frikened de senses clean out'n me, sah."

"What ghosts, you idiot?"

"Dem free big, white ghostses wha' done come out ob de room, sah."

"Nonsense! You've been drinking, sir. There are no such things as ghosts," snapped Josiah, getting up.

"'Scuse me, sah, I don't like ter 'spite yo' wo'd, sah, but I done seed 'em m'se'f, sah, very plain."

"Then where are they now?"

"True enough, where are they?"

Mr. Jones looked into the room very cautiously before entering.

There wasn't the first sign of a ghost, or anything else out of the common.

Ginger scratched his head, went in, looked all around and finally muttered :

"Wall, I don' see 'em now, sah, sure 'nuff, but maybe dey am a scared ob yo' sah, an' done run away."

"Nonsense, you've been drinking, I tell you, but if this thing occurs again I'll discharge you on the spot."

"Deed, sah, I ain' teched a drop ob nuffin' to-day, sah," protested that poor coon.

Josiah would not believe him, however, and he once more declared that he would discharge that coon on the spot if he offended again.

Meanwhile the show was proceeding at a rattling rate.

Shorty had told a story, the Kid had sung one of his best ditties, the balladist had charmed all hearers by his sweet notes, and the bass singer was getting down to the sub-cellars of his voice in a song about Dublin Bay or something of that sort.

"I say, grandpop," said the Kid suddenly, "what's the difference between a ton of coal and a wooden leg?"

"That's a strange question."

"Never mind dat, grandpop. What's der difference?"

"I'm sure I can't tell."

"Ah, go on," grunted Shorty. "Dat ain't no sort o' answer."

"Well den, I'll give yer another one. Der diff is dis: You put de coal in a place in de yard, but de wooden leg goes in de place of a foot, see?"

"Call me back again," said the Old Man, nodding to one of the singers.

"Dere ain't no danger of your getting called back, grandpop," said the Kid. "We'll let yer stay when yer go."

"Don't interrupt, Charles. That is a song which Mr. Castle is going to sing."

"Who told him he could sing?"

"Nobody, of course."



"Hold on—look out where you're going!" bawled the Old Man. Right ahead—directly in the course they were going—was a danger post. "Look out!" roared Mr. Burwick, unable to help himself, but the Kid and Shorty seemed to be totally deaf just then.

That sudden setting down had shaken him up in temper as well as in body, and poor Ginger got a fine, large dose of him before he was ready to go on.

"Don' see wha' de mattah wif de ole ge'man to-night," he mused when alone. "I 'clar ter goodness I see dem spooks just' plain as any, fing a hol'in' up deir ahms an' sayin' 'boo!' an' dat obst'nit ole ge'man say I'se been a-drinkin'. Neber did see de likes ob it, neber."

He wasn't made any wiser, either, for the ghosts did not show up again, being at that time engaged in putting on the finishing touches to their make up.

Of course you will have guessed that the three Shorty Kids were the apparitions, but neither the Old Man nor Ginger found it out.

As for Mr. Burwick he did not believe that there had been anything, and Ginger did not know what to make of it.

"Know bery well I see dem spooks," he repeated, upon thinking it over, "but dey ain' no use ter say so, 'cause dat pig-headed ole ge'man he won' b'lieve me. I jist lay fo' dem ghostses de nex' time, dough, an' smash dem in de snoots, dat's wha' I do."

"I know," piped out Shorty.

"Well, sir, let me hear you expl' the difference."

"Why, a ton of coal is a ton of coal, ain't it, pop?"

"Certainly."

"And a wooden leg is a wooden leg of course, ain't it?"

"Of course."

"Well, dat's der diff. Yer wouldn't buy a ton o' coal if you wanted a wooden leg, would yer?"

"Very true, George."

"Ah, dat ain't der answer," chirped the Kid. "Youse fellers ain't so smart as yer thinks."

"Well then, Charles, perhaps you can tell us the difference between a ton of coal and a wooden leg."

"Course I can. I ain't blind. You fellers must be I reckon, if yer can't tell der diff. Better go buy some specs."

"Well, but what is the difference?"

"I don't know."

"Den yer an old stuff, dat's all I gotter ter say."

"Den how did he find it out?"

"In the natural way, of course. Who told you that you could sing?"

"Nobody ever did, grandpop, and I know I can't, but I'm heavy on speakin' pieces. Ever hear me speak a piece?"

"No, sir, and I don't want to hear you speak a piece."

"Oh, but I'm great on dat."

"But Mr. Castle is going to sing, I tell you."

"Ah, no he ain't. Folks don't want ter hear him sing when I'm around. Just listen ter dis piece once."

"Well, you must speak only one, then, and not take our time."

Just get onto this, grandpop," and the Kid began to spout :

"My little boy he's asleep in his bed,  
Tired out with romp and play,  
The candle light falls on his curly head,  
As he dreams the hours away.  
His small jacket, thrown across a chair,  
His white, ruffled shirt doth hide;  
And his little slippers, placed with care,  
On the hearth, lie side by side.  
Oh, little shoes, may you never lead  
My boy from his duty astray;

Oh, little feet, may you never tread  
The stony and thorny way;  
Oh, little goloshes, may you never go  
In the road thick with stones and thorns;  
And oh, little feet, may you never grow  
A full crop of bunions and corns."

The house laughed, but the Old Man looked disgusted.

"That's really too bad," he said, "I thought you were going to give us a sweet little poem when you started out."

Then Shorty giggled.

"Does dat young duffer look like a feller dat could give you anything sweet, except taffy?" he snickered. "Ah, go on."

"Dat's all right, grandpop," laughed Charlie. "Dat's de way dey write machine poetry for tooth powder, soap and St. Bridget's oil, get yer interested and den spring a advertisement on yer. Dere's no patent on dat, anybody kin do it."

"Call me back again," sighed the Old Man, and the show went on.

It was a big success that night, and every night in fact, for all Chicago knew the Shortys, and the big theater was always packed.

The merry party was booked for a long stay, and so they made themselves at home and picked up a lot of acquaintances in addition to those they already had.

The Old Man did not suspect that that ghost business was a snap, as he did not believe in such things, but he was getting rather cranky just now, anyhow, so that Shorty decided to get up something to settle him.

If he had known about the ghost racket, the boys would have had a talking to, but he did not and of course they kept quiet about it.

However, he and Charlie agreed to roast him on something else right away, to see if they could cure him of his general cussedness.

There was no use trying to soak him in the way of stage business, for he was getting so independent that he wouldn't do anything but sit in the middle in the first part and would kick like a mule if asked to appear after that.

As for getting him to do anything in a farce, you might as well have asked him to jump off the roof, for he wouldn't listen to it.

Well, Shorty and the Kid posted the door-keeper of the theater and everything was ready for their little snap.

One cold, blustering winter's night in early January the Old Man drove to the theater and, accompanied by Ginger, started to enter as usual.

The man at the door barred their way and said gruffly:

"Do you want to see anybody?"

The Old Man was simply paralyzed with astonishment.

The man had let him in a score of times, yet he had the impudence to ask him if he wanted to see anybody.

"Of course, I want to see somebody," snapped Josiah.

"Who is it, then? Got a card? Who shall I see?"

The Old Man was speechless with surprise.

Ginger Jones was astonished too, but he managed to say:

"Why, sah, don' yo' know us? We am Mistah Burwick and him wally, dat's wha' we is."

The man look incredulous, and said with a chuckle:

"Oh, no, you ain't. I know Mr. Burwick, and I know his man. I let them in ten minutes ago."

"What!" gasped Josiah. "You let me in ten minutes ago?"

"No, sir, not you, sir, but Mr. Burwick and Ginger Jones."

"But I'm Mr. Burwick myself."

"An' I'se Ginger Jones!"

"Oh, no," said the man. "You can't try any of that on me. I've been weaned, I ain't no baby. You'll have to tell some other story to have it go down."

"Why—why—you've seen me a d-dozen t-t-times," sputtered the Old Man, scarcely able to control himself.

"Yas'r, you, you'se seen me fifty times," put in Ginger.

"Never saw you before in my life," said that unblushing door-keeper. "If you want to see anybody send in your names."

"Well, I neber did!"

"W-wh-what do you mean, sir?" growled the Old Man, nearly losing his false teeth in his rage. Do you know who I am, sir? I am Josiah Burwick, sir, the most important man in th-this sh-sh-show, sir, and I'll re-report y-y-you t-to the—"

"Don't get gay, old gent," said that inexorable door-keeper. "Mr. Burwick is inside, I tell you, and you can't give me any fairy stories like that."

"Oh, he's inside, is he?" sneered the mad old gent, with a sudden idea in his head. "Well, please tell him that an old friend of his would like to see him."

"Certainly, sir. What name?"

"Josiah Burwick—same name as his own. Very singular coincidence, isn't it? Ugh! I won't stand any more of this farce. Let me pass, sir, or I'll have you reported."

"Yas'r let us pass, sah, or yo' git bounced, sah," said Ginger.

"That won't do at all," said the door-keeper.

"You're only fakes and can't get in."

"Send for Mr. Shanks, then, and he'll tell you who I am."

"Mr. Shanks is too busy, and he won't see no one."

"Tell um to sen' fo' Marse Gawge, or Marse Charlie, sah," suggested Ginger. "Dey'll know us of course."

"To be sure. Send for Mr. George or Mr. Charles Burwick, either of them," sputtered the Old Man. "I never heard of such impudence. The man must be drunk or crazy not to know us."

"You wait here till I bring 'em, then," said the man, passing through an inner door and closing it behind him.

He returned in about five minutes.

"You can't work that snap on us, partner. Shorty and the Kid are busy and won't see anybody, and Mr. Burwick says you're a skin."

Josiah was astonished beyond anything.

He began to sputter away and make a great fuss, and at last tried to force his way past the door-keeper.

The latter gently but firmly took the old man by the arm and led him outside, where he left him to cool his heels and his anger on the cold pavement.

Ginger attempted to cut up nasty, but the doorkeeper hustled him out into a snow drift in short order and banged the door shut in a jiffy.

"Now! Wha de mattah wif dat man anyhow?" muttered Ginger, as he picked himself out of the drift.

"The idea of ejecting me from a theater where I have been playing almost a month!" stormed the old man. "It's preposterous. I shall see Mr. Shanks about it at once. No, I won't. I'll go right back to New York. Ginger, call the carriage."

"De car'ge done gone away, Marse Burwick," said the coon.

"Well, then, order me another. We can't stay here all night, freezing to death."

"Don't sposse yo' could find a car'ge for love nor money dis time, Marse Burwick. Dey are all engaged."

"Don't care what you think," snapped Josiah. "Go and look for one. I'll wait on the corner."

There was a drug store on the corner, and here Mr. Burwick waited while Ginger hunted for a carriage.

That coon did not care to run about the cold, windy streets of Chicago looking for a carriage very long, and he presently hurried back to the drug store and told his boss that no conveyance was to be had.

"I'll go and give that doorkeeper a piece of my mind," he muttered, starting off at a tangent.

When he reached the stage door again there was no one to oppose him and he walked right in.

He heard the sound of music, and walking to the wings, he looked on the stage and saw that the first part was in progress.

Shorty and the Kid sat in their accustomed places, and, yes, there he was, in the middle, his own image, another man as like himself when blacked up as you can imagine.

"Well, I must be going crazy!" he muttered, as he went to his dressing room.

Here he found the three boys getting ready for their act.

"Hallo, papa," said Cal. "I thought you were sick."

"Pop had to put another man in your place," said Pete. "He said it didn't make any difference anyhow."

"My dad said anyone could do your part," added Ed, "and when you didn't show up, they got one of the stage hands. He's just as good."

"H'm! no doubt!" growled Mr. Burwick. "He'd better take my place all the time. Cal, you're going to New York to-night. Ah, Ginger, go telephone for a carriage."

Ginger went off but did not do any telephoning, for he met Shanks and explained matters.

Shanks looked in at the show a minute and then laughed and took a tumble.

"Those two jokers take the cake!" he observed, "but I've got to smooth things over with the Old Man or he'll leave sure enough."

Josiah never really knew the truth of the matter, for Shorty and the Kid and the door-keeper all made him believe that it was a mistake and not a put up job, but he nevertheless was as cranky as ever after it, on account of the injury to his pride.

Shorty did not mind how much he kicked, nor did the Kid, but it bothered the women, and Shanks did not like it at all.

Being the manager of the show, he had got all the best dates he could, and had advertised the thing big, giving the Old Man a good puffing, and of course he did not want that irascible old fraud to skip.

He could run the show with George and Charlie and the boys, and make money, but he had advertised the whole family, and wanted to keep his word.

When the Old Man kept threatening to go home, therefore, it worried Shanks, for the latter thought Mr. Burwick might possibly be in earnest, and he didn't want any such thing to happen.

"I declare," said Mrs. Josiah, one morning after her husband had been fretting and making all manner of fuss, "I do wish to goodness you would go home, Josiah Burwick, if you are going to bother the life out of all of us in this way."

"Well, I had it distinctly understood, when we started out," said the Old Man, "that there were to be no practical jokes, and we don't get anything else. I'm sick of it and I'm going home."

"You play just as many jokes as George does," said Kate, "only you don't do them so well."

"Why don't you go home, if you're going?" spoke up Caddie. "I wish to goodness you would."

"You're just worrying the life out of us, and out of the boys and Mr. Shanks and keeping us in a heap of trouble all the time," added Angie, "and I do wish you'd go if you're going and have an end to it."

"Well, I am going," snapped the old crank, "and you and Cal and Ginger are going with me. We'll leave to-night by the limited."

"You may, if you like," spoke up Kate, Shorty's wife and Angie's mother, "but Angelina is not going to be dragged away from everybody just on your account."

"Indeed I'm not and neither is Cal," added Mrs. Josiah. "You make that boy's life weary talking so much about going home, just when he's enjoying himself so much."

"Well, I'll go home alone, then," snapped Mr. Burwick.

"Then for heaven's sake go now!" cried the three women at once.

Just then in came Shorty and the three boys and Charlie.

"What's der matter, pop?" asked Shorty.

"Yer look sick."

"Oh, he's been telling us that he's going back to New York," said Caddie.

"Better go out and get some fresh air, pop," said Shorty. "Me and der Kid and der boys are going skating. Come on, it'll do yer good."

"I go skating!" exclaimed the Old Man. "Nonsense!"

"No, it ain't nonsense. Come on, it'll do yer good."

"But I haven't had skates on my feet for forty years."

"Come on, anyhow. All yer want is fresh air to blow de crankiness out o' yer. It'll make a new man o' yer."

"Oh, yes, come on, pop!" cried Cal.

The women all urged him to go, because they knew that if he did they would not be bothered with him any more that morning.

"What's the use of my going when I can't skate?" objected Josiah.

"Well, me and Charlie kin push yer, can't we? We'll get one of dem chairs on runners and take yer all over der pond."

"You'd better take Ginger for that," said the Old Man.

"All right, take Gingie along if yer want ter, but come on anyway."

The three boys all had something to say about it, and finally Josiah consented to go.

They all went to Lincoln Park, where the lake was covered with a solid coat of ice and the ground all around had on its winter overcoat of snow.

The Old Man, in a big fur coat and a two-story fur cap, looked for all the world like a Laplander or Esquimau, he was so round and short and fat.

Ginger Jones was not dead mashed on that sort of weather, and would have much preferred remaining at the hotel and flirting with the yellow chambermaid, but as Josiah had expressly ordered him to be present, there was no getting out of it.

Shorty and the Kid quickly fastened on their skates, and, after gliding around for a few minutes, came back and got the Old Man.

They put him in one of those big, high-backed chairs that slide on runners, and then off they started.

Ginger, being relieved of the responsibility of looking after the Old Man, betook himself to one of the houses of refreshment along the shores of the lake and proceeded to enjoy himself to the best of his ability.

The three boys, being provided with skates, started off on a race to see which could reach a certain point first.

They presently dashed past the elders of the family and shouted out an adieu as they hurried on.

"Maybe we can catch 'em," said Shorty. "Come on, Chawles."

"Let her go, dad," sang out the Kid. "Dem young fellers won't get away, you bet."

Then they gave that chair a shove and away they scooted like the wind itself.

"Hold on—don't go so fast—don't go so fast!" howled Josiah.

The two scamps never heard him, or at least they didn't seem to.

They just let things go for all they were worth.

"Hold on—look out where you're going!" bawled the Old Man.

Right ahead—directly in the course they were going—was a danger post.

"Look out!" roared Mr. Burwick, unable to help himself, but the Kid and Shorty seemed to be totally deaf just then.

#### CHAPTER XV.

STRAIGHT for the danger post went Shorty and the Kid, steering that helpless Old Man in his chair.

They did not go all the way, however, you can bet.

Oh, no, they were too fly for anything like that.

They gave the chair a shove and then let go, coming to a stop in a few moments.

Away went that chair with a rush, gliding over the ice like the wind, and the Old Man yelling for it to stop.

It did stop, sure enough, but not until it had banged right on top of the sign post.

Then it tumbled over, and out went Josiah.

He was no sooner out than he was in again—in the water, in fact.

The ice was all broke up on him when he struck it, and in he went into the cold water.

He was likewise in the soup, exceedingly much.

In two shakes all you could see of him was the top of his shining bald head floating on the icy waves.

Shorty and the Kid stood on the good ice gazing at the sad spectacle, while the three boys, not knowing what had happened, were skating in the distance.

Josiah bobbed up in a minute and began yelling like blazes.

"Help, help, save me!" he bawled.

The water was not really over his head when he stood up, but he thought it was.

At any rate it isn't very great fun standing in ice water up to your neck.

"Save me, save me!" he howled.

Shorty and the Kid wanted to laugh, but they restrained themselves, so as not to give the thing away.

"Hold on, pop, we'll fix yer," cried Shorty.

"Keep yer head up, gov'nor, and we'll be there in a minute," added the Kid.

Half a dozen or more people had assembled by this time, and more were arriving every second.

Somebody got a plank and ran it out to the Old Man, and in a little while he was hauled in out of the wet.

"Come on, dad, you'll be sure to catch your death o' cold if yer don't hustle," said Shorty.

"Yes, grandpop, yer gotter run ter keep up der circulation," said Charlie.

Then those two little runts grabbed that poor old duffer, one on each side, and hustled him away in a twinkling.

They had skates on and he did not, you must remember.

They didn't lose any time either, but struck right out.

Josiah's short, fat legs shot back and forth like piston rods, and he puffed like a porpoise.

He was soon blown out, of course, the sweat pouring off him by the buckets.

"Hold up, not so fast!" he snorted, trying to stop.

The two jokers kept right on, and poor Josiah's legs just trailed after him on the ice.

"Hallo, pop, you ain't half running," cried Shorty. "Shake a foot. You don't want ter take sick and kick the bucket, do yer?"

"Yer a nice feller, you are, to make us do all der work," sniffed the Kid. "Get a move on yer if yer don't want ter get sick and croak."

The poor Old Man could scarcely gasp and the two jokers stopped, being now near one of the lake houses.

Out came Ginger Jones to see what the crowd meant and then he saw Mr. Burwick; soaking wet and as limp as a rag, being led in by his two bad boys.

Of course, Ginger had to do the indignation act at once, to cover up his own shortcomings.

"Dere! I might ha' known dem two ca'less fellahs would hab suffin' happen ef dey wen' off wif yo' by deir lones," he sputtered. "I didn't wan' ter let dem go 'tall, but dey jess 'suaded me dey 'd take car' ob yo' jess's well's I could m'se'f, when I knowned bettah all de time. Clar fo' it, ef yo' can trus' dem fellahs just a lilly bit. Ain' yo' shamed, yo' ca'less boys, ter let yo' po' ole fader fall inter de watah like dat? I is, ef you isn't, so dere!"

This went down with the Old Man, but Shorty and the Kid just grinned.

However, they did not say anything and Josiah was taken into the house, set down before a hot stove, given something hot to drink and wrapped up till he looked like a regular cask.

"That's the last time I go out with you fellows again!" he sputtered. "I might have known something would happen. It always does when I do anything you boys suggest."

"Well, how could we see der danger sign, pop, when you took up so much room?"

"But I shouted to you time enough for you to stop."

"Ah, de wind must have been der wrong way den."

"Just suppose what you'd do if I'd been drowned."

"Well, dere wouldn't have been any show to-night, pop, but you'd 've had der bulliest funeral we could get up and no crawlin'."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," snapped Josiah, disgusted.

"Yas'r, yo' orter be 'shamed of yo'sev's, bofe ob youse," added Ginger.

"Shut up!" snorted Mr. Burwick. "If you'd been along, as I meant you should, the thing would not have happened."

That shut Ginger up, and he kept quiet after that. The Old Man got thawed out and dried out after a time, and then he was sent home in a carriage, as mad as a hatter.

"Catch me going out with those fellows again," he said more than once on the way home. "It's a wonder I haven't been killed long before now, with all I've gone through."

He didn't take much of a cold after his ice water bath, but he had a touch of his old rheumatism, and when that got hold of him, he did not have the temper of an angel, unless it were a very bad one, the kind that live down in the subcellar and take care of the furnaces, you know.

Ginger had cause, that night, to regret the return of the rheumatism, the Old Man making it decidedly hot for him.

Really, that coon was as good at fixing his master up that night as he ever was, but Josiah was cranky and did not think so.

"Don't hustle my things on like that, you donkey!" sputtered he. "Can't you put that cork on without getting it all in my eyes?"

"Kean't help it, Marse Burwick, if yo' keep yo' eyes open," said the coon, apologetically. "I don't go fo' ter do it, sah."

"Don't tell me you can't help it, you black rascal. You can help it, and you know it. Don't you know it, you scoundrel?"

"Yas'r, I knows it. I kin help it, ob co'se, sah."

This giving in did not suit the Old Man any better than disputing him.

"Well, then, if you can help it, why don't you, confound your black skin."

"Yas'r, I'se bery sorry," muttered Mr. Jones, wishing the minstrel business, the Old Man,

the rheumatism and the whole lot at the bottom of the lake.

He was glad when Josiah was out of his hands and had gone on the stage, to sit in the middle and listen to those old gags and weary songs as he had often done before.

Ginger had had a pretty good day of it, and when the Old Man had gone, that coon stretched himself out on a lounge in the dressing-room, and proceeded to fill in the hour in which Josiah would be absent, in the most agreeable fashion.

In four minutes Mr. Jones was fast asleep and enjoying himself.

Shortly afterward the three Shorty Kids came along, saw the door open and looked in.

They beheld that colored sleeping beauty and chuckled.

"Well, if that ain't cheeky," said Cal. "He takes the cruller."

"He ought to get bounced out of that," suggested my namesake.

"Let's give him the razoo in the good old style," said Ed. "It's a good chance to get square on him."

"Come on," said Cal, "I know how to fix it."

Then off they went, those three jolly boys, to fix up things for that cranky coon.

Presently they entered with a big snap-and-catch-em clothespin, a fat toy spider hung from a stick and a pair of handcuffs.

They slipped the bracelets on Ginger's wrists, they stuck the stick in a crack in the partition over the coon's head and clapped the clothespin on his flat nose.

Then they skipped out just far enough to enjoy the fun and be out of harm's way when the coon awoke.

That hold-em-fast clothespin got in its fine work very speedily, cutting off Ginger's snore and making him think that a crab had taken hold of his nose.

He awoke with a start, struck his head against the big spider and set it to dancing.

"Wow!" he muttered, making a pass at the fake spider.

Up came both hands of course, and the clothespin was yanked off of the moke's nose.

"Fo' de lan' sakes! wha' dat got hol' ob me?" he sputtered.

He went to feel of his nose, and both hands came in contact with it.

The spider was now just over his head again, and he jumped up to get away from it.

Not having the free use of his hands, he rolled over on the floor, fell on the clothespin and knocked it silly.

By this time he was pretty much awake.

"Fo' goodness sake, wha' got dem wristsels on mah han's?" he muttered. "Did I been rested fo' anyting? Bress me if I can 'membah dat."

Then he happened to look up, and saw that big fat spider dangling above him. He threw up his hands to hit it, but could not reach it.

"I fix yo' dis time," he remarked.

Then he hoisted up one of those big feet of his and sent the insect flying.

The next minute he went flying himself, having been overbalanced.

Over he went, striking a big stone cupidore with the back of his woolly head.

It didn't hurt the head worth mentioning, but the cupidore got it bad.

"Deah me! I'se got in a heap ob trubble," grunted Ginger, sitting up. "Who de dooce put dem han cuffs on mah wrists, an how's I gwine ter get dem off."

The boys just then heard the band playing the music which brought them on, and away they bounced, leaving Ginger alone.

"Ain' gwine ter stay yer an' let Marse Burwick see me dis a way," he remarked. "May be one ob dem stage cyarpenter fellahs get dese tings off'n me."

Away he went and hunted up one of the stage hands, who promised to attend to him directly.

Directly was a long time coming, however, and Ginger got tired waiting.

Moreover, the man skipped away and Ginger could not find him when he finally went to hunt him up.

Then he asked another man to help him, and the latter grinned and said he would presently.

Presently was as long in coming to time as directly was, and Ginger went off to find some other fellow.

By that time the first part was over, and the Old Man went to his room to fix up.

In he went in a hurry, and the first thing he knew a big, fat, seven legged spider was bobbing up against his nose.

"Great Cæsar!" observed Mr. Burwick, jump-

ing back so suddenly that he sat down on the floor, made a compound fracture of his suspender and nearly vomited his false teeth.

"Hi-hi, Ginger!" he bawled, "come here, quick, help, help!"

Ginger heard the summons, and forgetting all about the bracelets, rushed to his master's assistance.

He rushed in so quick withal that he took a header over the Old Man and dove clean under the dressing-table.

The Old Man got a biff in the ear from Ginger's big feet and that put him in no pleasant frame of mind you bet.

"What have you been doing?" he demanded, angrily. "What have you been doing?"

"Nuffin'!"

"Then what made you put those things on for, you idiot?"

"Didn't put dem on, sah. How's I gwine ter put dem on m'sef I like ter know? I couldn't do it, sah."

"Then who did do it, you old fool?" snarled the Old Man, who was losing what little temper he had started with.

"Don't know, sah. Habn't no idee who done done it."

That was just a shade too much for Josiah.

"Got arrested, have you, Jones? Well, it serves you right."

"How long are they going to give you, Cooney? It ought to be six years."

At first Ginger was inclined to be uppish with those boys.

He realized, however, that if he was he could not expect any help from them.

"Somebody done put dem t'ings on mah han's when I was tookin' a lilly bit ob a nap in mah room," he explained. "I spect it was Marsa Go'ge or Marse Charlie. Dem two fellahs is always up ter some mischief or noder. Jess took dem t'ings off'n me, won' yo', young gemen?"



"Help, help, save me!" he bawled. The water was not really over his head when he stood up, but he thought it was. At any rate it isn't very great fun standing in ice water up to your neck. "Save me, save me!" he howled.

He was not feeling very well to start with, and you can imagine how he felt after that.

"Yer I is, sah," gasped the coon. "Wha' yo' wan', sah?"

"What do I want, you big fool nigger?" sputtered Josiah. "Is that the way I have told you to address me? What do you mean by coming into the room in that fashion, you lunkhead?"

"Scuse me, sah, I didn't saw yo' when I come in, sah," apologized Ginger, pulling out from under the table.

Josiah got up, saw that spider again, retreated, grabbed up a boot from the floor, and let the reptile have it.

That is to say, he meant that the spider should get it.

Ginger got it instead, however, the heel of the boot colliding with his nose.

"Hol' on, hol' on!" he yelled. "Wha' yo' do dat fo'? I ain't done nuffin'!"

Then Josiah tumbled to the real character of the spider, and also to the fact that Ginger was handcuffed.

"What have you got those things on your

"You don't know, you black bedlamite!" he snapped. "You're not blind, are you?"

"No, sah."

"Then why don't you know who did it?" To tell this would be to expose the secret of the coon's having been asleep in his master's room.

That would never do, of course, and so Ginger proceeded to invent a story to fit the occasion.

"Dey was leben or seben of dem come inter de room aftah yo' done wen' out an' when I was fixin' tings," he replied, glibly, "an' dey all had suffin' ober deir moufs, an' I couldn't tell who dey was."

"You don't say!" gasped Josiah. "They must have been burglars. Did they take anything, Ginger?"

"Don't know, sah, I didn't see 'em, but dey tol' me notter say nuffin' ef I didn't wan' mah haid blowed off."

"The wretches!" gasped Josiah, beginning to rummage through his clothes.

Ginger thought this was a good time to skip, and skip he did without further ceremony.

In the passage he met the three boys.

"Hallo, Ginger, what have you been doing?"

"Well, you are a big stuff!"

"And as blind as a bat!"

"What's the matter with your doing it?"

Ginger looked surprised.

"Wha' yo' mean?" he asked.

"Why there's the key sticking in one of the

things now," laughed Cal. "All you have to do

is to turn it."

"How yo' spect I'se gwine ter do dat when bofe mah han's is tied up?" demanded Ginger, when he caught sight of the key which he had not before noticed.

"What is your big, ugly mouth for, I'd like to know?" asked Cal.

"You haven't just a little bit of sense, Ginger," snickered Pete.

"Not enough to last you over night," added Ed.

"Dat's so, sure 'nuff—I kin tone dat key wif mah teef," muttered Ginger.

Then he put his wrists up to his mouth and proceeded to business.

Just then, however, those three bad boys gave him a shove, sent him sprawling on the floor and dusted.

About that same time Josiah came out of his

room to tell Shorty and the Kid about the burglars that had visited the place in his absence.

It would not have been at all like the Old Man to get through without any trouble.

Consequently, he must needs fall over Ginger just as that mad coon was getting up.

Down they both went, and Ginger, thinking the boys were still bothering him, let fly with one of his big feet.

Josiah got it in the neck and collapsed, uttering a loud grunt.

"Dere! I'se just glad yo' got it good dat time!" declared Ginger. "Serbe yo' right, too, yo' lilly debbil!"

"Oh, he is, eh? How dare you talk like that?"

Then Mr. Jones got another bash in the rear, just as he was getting up.

"No, sah, I did n' mean dat, I meant ter say he was de bes' ob de lot, but that marse Petey an' dat marse Eddie am de wussest young loafahs in de hull business."

Along came Shorty and the Kid in time to hear that remark.

"I'll smash yer jaw, Ginger, if yer talk like dat about my Kid," said Shorty, pretending to be very mad.

"Yer'll get frowed off der roof if yer say dat

an' I was on'y just takin' de leas' lilly bit ob a nap."

"Don't tell me!" thundered Josiah. "If this happens again you'll get bounced, do you understand?"

Poor Ginger felt as if life no longer had any joys for him, and he went away with the Old Man feeling very, very sad.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE Shortys were on their last week in Chicago and intended to make it a booming one and no mistake.

It was the middle of January, the weather



In another minute the Old Man was flying down that banister-rail like a good one. "Hooray! Don't say we old fellows can't do anything!" he chirruped. He had not reached the bottom yet.

Josiah jumped to his feet, with anger in his heart.

There was no convenient weapon at hand, but he had his feet, and knew how to use them.

"You will kick me, will you?" he stormed. "Well, how do you like that?"

Thump!

"Serves me right, does it? How's that, then?"

Whack!

"How dare you talk to your master like that, you black rascal?"

Biff!

"Shall I ever teach you to treat me with proper respect, you old fool?"

Smack!

Every remark was followed up with a kick, planted in the best place possible.

Mr. Ginger Jones shortly realized that it was the Old Man who was doing the kicking now.

"Hol' on, hol' on, dere, Marse Burwick!" he yelled. "I ain' done nuffin' to youse. It was dem free bad boys."

"What three bad boys?" demanded Josiah. "Do you mean to include my son California in the list?"

"Yas'r, he am de wussest in de hull lot," sputtered Ginger.

"about my young un," put in the Kid, threateningly.

"Neber said it," hurriedly declared Ginger. "Dat was another Petey an' Eddie I was talkin' bout, an' not yo' chillen 'tall. Dey was good lilly boys, but I juss like ter know how I se gwine ter get dese tings off mah han's, dat's wha' I lak ter know, sah."

"Oh, dat's all right," chuckled George. "Der Black Maria is coming for yer in a few minutes."

"Yer won't get dem off at all till yer get in der jug," added Charlie. "Ta-ta, Ginger, old man, see yer when yer do yer time."

Then away went those jolly runts, leaving Ginger alone with the Old Man.

"Here, you old fool," snarled the latter. "I'll take those things off you, but if you ever get drunk again and let people make a fool of you, I'll discharge you."

"Oh, Marse Burwick, I neber did!" protested Ginger.

"Don't tell me!" snapped Josiah, when the nippers were off. "There never were any burglars. You just made that up. You got tight and went to sleep in my room."

"Clar to glory, I neber drunk nuffin', sah,

was cold and bracing, with plenty of good clear weather and lots of snow and everybody but the Old Man felt tiptop.

The three boys, when not in the theater, were sliding and skating and frolicking about to their heart's content, the three women went sleighing, took in numerous matinees and night shows, besides entertaining their friends, while George and Charlie always found enough to do to keep the ball rolling.

Ginger Jones and the Old Man had made up, for Josiah really needed the coon and was only cross with Mr. Jones when his rheumatism got the better of him, at which times he was not responsible for anything he said or did.

Shanks, the manager, had been exempt from rackets for some time, and so George and Charlie concluded that the last week in the breezy town on the lake, the world's fair city, should not go by without Longlegs having a send-off.

The manager was sitting in the box-office one day, when the door opened, although it was supposed to be kept locked, and in walked a big, stupid-looking Dutchman.

"You vos Mr. Shanks?" asked the man.

"Yes," said Shanks, shortly.

"My card," and the Dutchman passed over a four-inch-square bit of pasteboard.

At first sight Shanks thought he had got 'em sure.

He rubbed his eyes, turned the card up-side down, and then sidewise, then right-side up again, and then stared very hard at it.

"Great Scott! What sort of a name is that?" he muttered. "What do they call you when they ask for you at your house."

"You have difficulties with that name, is it so?" asked the Dutchman blandly. "That is so plain like anything."

"Is it?" gasped Shanks.

It did not look so at all events.

The name on the card was as follows:

DMTZO SMRLGCTHZQ.

No wonder that Shanks thought he had 'em.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Dat is an old Hungarian name—I am a Czech."

"Oh, you are, eh? A bank check or a laundry check?"

"No, sare, not a sheek, but Czech, a Hungarian. I am please to have some business mit you."

"Sit down, Mr.—Mr.—I beg your pardon, what did you say your name was?"

"Thomas Harris, sir, at your service."

"Jumping Methuselah!" yelled Shanks, "and does it take all those letters to spell Tom Harris in Hungarian? No wonder your country could never get her independence."

"It ees very simple when you know ze roles off pronouns, my dear sare," said the man.

"Very likely, but life is too short to induce me to attempt it. What is your business, Mr. Alphabet?"

"Mr. Thomas Harris, eef you please. You hafe ze show, Mr. Shanks, ze trope, I beleaf."

"Oh, yes, I've got a show, but we're all full," gasped Shanks, hurriedly.

No amount of money would have induced him to put that infernal machine of a name on his bills, even had the man possessed ten times the talent of all the Shortys put together.

"It ees not ze place on ze trope zat I hafe ze desire for," said the man with the name.

"Oh, I'm glad of that," thought poor Shanks.

"I hafe ze good thing to recite to you, ze great choke, ze bullee little snap zat you call him, ze grand idea for your comique."

"Oh, I see, you want to sell me some new jokes?" groaned Shanks.

This was even worse than wanting to join the company.

Shanks had seen so-called funny men before, and he always avoided them if possible.

"You have right, that ees my beesness, I hafe ze good things to sell to you, all new, all joost from ze mint off my brain."

"Got a brass foundry in your head, have you?" asked Shanks.

He with the name failed to make a date with the satire contained in that remark.

"Yes, I hafe a mine off ze goot things in me. I will recite you one of ze most comique."

"A man hears to tell zat ze raven lifes ze four hundred year and buy one to him to see if it ze troot shall prove. Zat ees very goot, is it not so?"

"Oh, that's your big joke, is?" asked Shanks. "Whose barrel of chestnuts have you been in?"

"Zat is ze fine one, is it not so?" asked that stolid Dutchman.

"Oh, yes, it's very good, too good, in fact, and as for its age, well I think ten thousand years would be a low estimate of its age."

"Oh, you make ze grand mistake; zat is fraish, yust coined from—."

"Well, give us another," said Shanks.

"Zees also ees ze new choke. You are ze very first to hear zees spark off my brain."

"Ze man have ze mansion to dispense in ze market, and he take ze leetle stone for an example. Ah, zat eez ze grand wit which I hafe, ees it not so?"

Shanks proceeded to tear out what little hair he had left.

"Holy smoke! what sort of an idiot are you, anyhow?" he yelled, jumping up. "That joke was old before time began!"

"Oh, you are mistake, zat ees ze last thing zat come from ze work-house off—"

Shanks began looking around for a club, striding up and down the room in a state of agitation bordering upon insanity.

"You have the excitement, the emotion, is it not?" asked the Dutchman with cool placidity.

"You just want to waltz out of here as suddenly as you can," said Shanks, "or there will

be a corpse lying around here pretty soon, and you won't know anything about it."

"Ah, then it is that you like ze grand wit which I possess to myself, is it not?" and the fiend actually smiled. "Yes, I always make an impression, I."

Shanks had by this time found a big ebony ruler and, brandishing this, he now remarked:

"Yes, you idiot, and I'm going to make an impression now. Get right out of here or you'll be taken out feet first."

"It is that you are excited, ha, and that to defend myself to my life 'tis for me necessary, so?"

Then that stranger pulled out a pistol and stood on his guard.

"Don't you dare to pull a pop on me, you half-baked idiot," exclaimed that mad manager. "If you give me any guff I'll split you open."

Then he pushed a button connecting with a bell on the stage and rushed at Mr. Smrlz—, etc.

Pop!

The pistol went off and Shanks sat down very suddenly.

"Great cesspools and sewers! What was that?"

There was reason for the exclamation.

The place smelled like a Polish Jew boarding-house, the New York docks at low tide and an Italian residence all lumped together.

It was as if a Chinese stink-pot had exploded, the odor was so intense.

Limburger cheese, garlic, rotten eggs, decayed vegetables and putrid cats seemed to have combined all their strongest perfumes in making up that effluvium.

Naples, Cologne, lower New York, Barren Island nor Chinatown could have rivalled that stench in its strength and density.

"Jehosaphat! what has happened!" gasped poor Shanks.

The man with the insane asylum name had skipped out when Shanks got his breath again.

Then in came Shorty, the Kid, several members of the company, three or four stage hands and two policemen.

"Good grief? Open the windows!"

"What's this, a Dutch restaurant?"

"Who's dead in here, anyhow?"

"Are you hurt so bad as that, Shanks?"

"What in heaven's name was that fellow's pistol loaded with?" muttered Shanks.

"Is dis der pistol?" asked Shorty, picking something up off the floor.

It was a bottle, shaped like a pistol, and the cork was out.

From it proceeded a stench which made all hands weep.

The man with the name had simply given the thing a shake, and the cork had flown out.

No ordinary cork could hold in that combination of strong odors when once they were agitated.

There was assafoetida, sulphuretted hydrogen and several other malodorous things, and the combination was simply awful.

"Ugh! It must be that fellow's jokes that smell so bad," grunted Shanks, as he made a bolt and escaped.

Then the bottle was dropped in a sewer, and the office fumigated.

The man with the jokes as musty as the contents of the bottle never showed up.

Good reason why. He was a bit of a wag of a druggist whom Shorty had put up to the snap, and he valued his life too highly to present himself before that very mad and very indignant manager again.

That week closed up the engagement in Chicago, and on the Monday following the show opened in St. Louis to big business.

Things went booming, and the seats for every performance of the first week were all taken up by Wednesday morning, the Shortys being as popular in St. Louis as anywhere else on the route.

Along in the middle of the week Shorty put up a gag on the Old Man, which was warranted to knock out anything.

The whole party, including Shanks, stopped at a small private hotel, where there were few other boarders, and where, with "all the comforts of home," as the advertisements say, our friends could feel just like a family, and not be simply a drop in the bucket as they would be in a big hotel.

One afternoon Shorty and the Kid had a discussion with Shanks as to the liveliness of some old men and the uselessness of others.

The discussion took place in the parlor, Mr. Burwick being concealed behind a big news-paper, over in one corner of the room.

He was evidently very much absorbed, and the debators paid no attention to him, although two of them meant that he should hear all that was said.

"Well, yes, o' course," said Shorty, in answer to a statement made by Shanks, "some old men is all right, but yer can't say der whole of 'em is."

"I've seen ole duffers of eighty or ninety split half a cord o' wood afore breakfast myself," put in the Kid, "but dey ain't many what can do it."

"Oh, yes there are," said Shanks, "more than you think. You couldn't do it now."

"Well, I guess not," said Shorty. "Some ole blokes of ninety are as chipper as boys, an' kin box or kick a football or play tenpins better'n fellers of twenty-five, but dey ain't many of 'em."

"Oh, you're mistaken, George," said Shanks. "The old men of this age are really better than the young ones—that is to say, there are more lively old ones than young ones."

"Ah, go on," snorted Shorty.

"I've heard of old fellers skating and runnin' and doin' stunts an' knockin' out der young fellers," said the Kid.

"Yes, and you can find plenty of them, too," put in Shanks.

"Where you'll find one of dat sort, ye'll find a dozen dat ain't no good," retorted the Kid.

"Yer can't tell me dat der ole men is better dan der young ones," snorted Shorty. "I don't swaller dat."

"Yes, sir, it's so. Why, some old men will do anything that they ever did."

Josiah began to get interested in this conversation.

He allowed that he was just as young as he used to be, and that he could show George and Charlie that he was not a useless old man by any means.

"Do anything?" said the Kid.

"Yes, of course."

"Even to playin' par and slidin' down-stairs, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"Ah, go on. Yer won't find any old man dat kin do it."

Josiah did not like this sort of tone for a cent.

He would show that sneering Shorty what he could do and put him to shame.

He came out from behind his newspaper and said emphatically:

"I can do all those things myself, and I flatter myself I'm no chicken."

All hands were surprised at the Old Man's sudden appearance.

That is, Shanks was really so, but George and Charlie only put it on.

"Hallo, pop, I didn't know you was here," said Shorty.

"When did you come in anyhow?" asked the Kid. "I didn't see you."

"Oh, I've been here all the time. So you think that old men are no good, do you?"

"I allus said some of dem was," answered Shorty.

"Some of dem are, of course," added the Kid with peculiar emphasis.

That got the Old Man, and he sniffed back:

"H'm! I suppose you mean by that that I'm not one of that sort?"

"Oh, you are only an old stuff!" giggled Shorty.

"Indeed!" snapped Josiah in great dudgeon.

"We don't count in old duffers like you," continued the Kid.

"Oh, you don't, eh?" replied Josiah. "That's pretty talk!"

"Come, come, boys, you must not speak about your father like that," interposed Shanks.

"Ah, he's no good, he ain't," Shorty answered, chuckling.

"He couldn't beat der kids at stunts, he couldn't," said Charlie.

"Oh, I say now, Charlie, George, you mustn't say that."

"Don't you mind them, Mr. Shanks," said Josiah. "They don't know what they're talking about."

"Come now, pop," said Shorty, putting his hand in his pocket, "talk is cheap, but money does all der shoutin'. I'mbettin' yer dat yer can't do dem stunts yer used ter could."

"Nonsense! I'm just as young as you or Charlie or Cal. I can do anything you can."

"Can you slide down der banisters like yer used ter?" asked George.

"Of course I can," declared the Old Man, putting on a lot of side, and trying to bluff the thing out.

"Bet yer ten dollars yer can't slide from der top of der banisters to der floor," said Shorty.

"I'll take a slice o' dat on my plate, too," put in the Kid. "Bet yer can't slide from der top to der floor, grandpop."

Josiah would have liked to back out, but he could not very well do so now.

"Of course you can do it, Mr. Burwick," said Shanks, with mistaken zeal.

He did not really believe it, but he had his side of the argument to maintain.

That little remark settled the thing then and there.

"I know I can do it," retorted Mr. Burwick, "and I'll prove it, too."

flight is all yer'll do, and yer won't do dat. I'm bettin' yer won't slide from der top to der floor below, see?"

"Oh!" answered Josiah, very much relieved.

"Come on," said the Kid. "We don't want everybody in dis."

However, by the time they all got to the top landing, there was a pretty good crowd to witness the famous slide.

Shorty, the Kid, Shanks, Ginger Jones, Cal, Pete and Ed were all assembled on the top flooring, waiting to see the fun.

Josiah took off his coat and handed it to Shanks.

"No going on yer hunkies, pop," said Shorty.

In another minute the Old Man was flying down that banister-rail like a good one.

"Hooray! Don't say we old fellows can't do anything!" he chirruped.

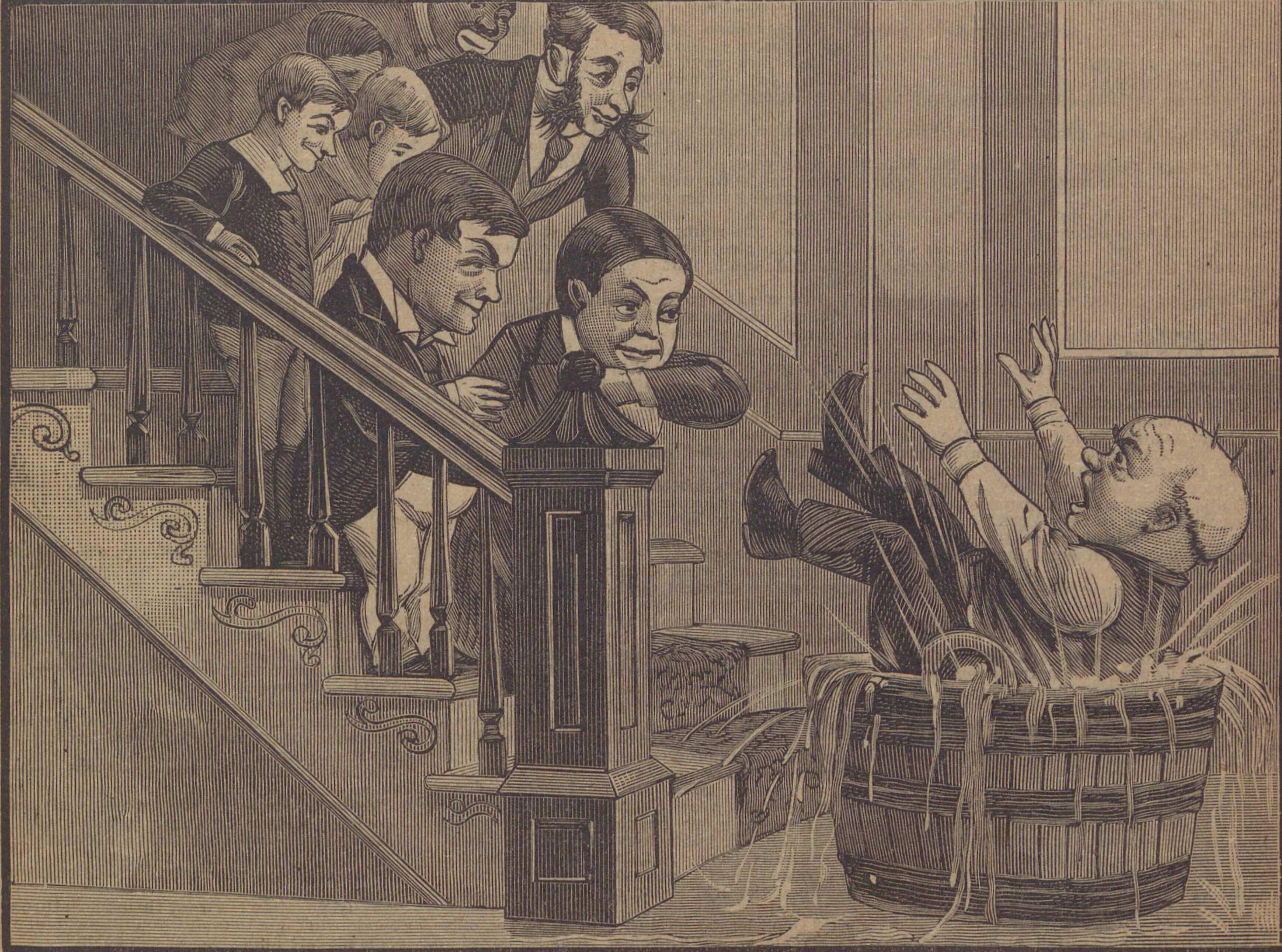
He had not reached the bottom yet.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

LIKE a comet whizzing through space, like a cannon ball making its best time, or like an arrow in its giddiest flight, went the Old Man down the banisters.

The bet was that he could not slide from the top to the floor.

He thought he could and Shorty knew he could not.



The Old Man plumped right into the middle of it, and there was a big splash. All you could see of that misguided old party were his heels, his suspender buttons and a shower of spray.

"Come on, then, said Shorty. "Put up your money, pop. Shanksy will hold der stakes."

Nobody wanted to know who would hold Shanks, for they could all trust him.

Three dirty ten dollar bills were put in the manager's hands in a jiffy.

It's customary to talk about crisp, clean, new notes in novels I know, and that's the reason I didn't say so.

You won't find any collar buttons in Peter's pockets, boys, and don't you forget it.

Well, Shanks had the money, and now was to come the contest.

"Come on," said Shorty. "Now is just as good a time as any ter show wot yer can do, pop."

There was no backing out now, and Josiah put on more side than before.

"You'll find I'm not such a chump as you think," he observed, as all hands went out.

"Come on up to der top floor," suggested Shorty. "Dey won't be any one ter disturb us dere."

"I ain't going to slide clear from the top to the bottom," protested the Old Man. "One flight is all I meant."

"Dat's all right, pop," said Shorty. "One

"Yer gotter go down in der reg'lar way," put in the Kid.

"Here, I'll show you now, papa," said Cal, striding the rail.

"Come off, young feller," said Shorty. "Give the old gent a chance."

"Yer gotter straddle der rail and go down sittin' up," said the Kid. "No sneaking now."

"Just as if I didn't know how to slide down the banisters," snapped the Old Man.

"Put a piece of leather on the seat of your breeches, grandpa," said Peter. "Then you won't have to have them half-soled."

"You let yer grandpop alone, Petey," said Shorty. "He knows more about dis sort of ting dan you do."

"Wull! if dat amn't de funnies' ting I eber see," remarked Ginger, aside. "Reckon de ole ge'man mus' be clean gone crazy. De idee ob him sliding down de ballustahs! I neber see de like—neber!"

"Clear the track," said Shorty, in a loud tone.

All hands stood aside, and the Old Man straddled the railing.

"Now we're off!" shouted the Kid.

"Hoop-la!" echoed Shorty.

There was one obstacle in the way that the Old Man had not reckoned upon.

This was a big tub, full of water, at the bottom of the first flight of stairs.

It was not there when the gang went up, but it was when Josiah began his terrific slide for life.

Shorty had fixed a couple of the waiters in the house and they had deposited the tub where it would do the most good, when Shorty gave the signal.

Even if Josiah did not fall off he could not reach the floor with that thing in the way.

Between you and me he had overestimated his powers as a gymnast.

Before he had gone a third of the way he lost his grip.

He gave a yell, tried to grab the rail, only burnt his hands for his pains, and slid down like greased lightning.

The further he went the steeper it got of course.

When two-thirds of the way down he went flying off, rolled down four or five steps, and then bounced off like a rubber ball.

It was just his luck, of course, to go sousing right into that tub, as Shorty had intended.

Swash!  
Splash!

It was no baby tub either, you can bet.  
It was a good big one, wide and deep and full of water.

The Old Man plumped right into the middle of it, and there was a big splash.

All you could see of that misguided old party were his heels, his suspender buttons and a shower of spray.

In a couple of shakes, you could not see even that much.

"Hallo, pop is drowned!" cried Shorty.  
"He's in the soup, I'll take my beans," laughed the Kid.

"Bress mah haht ef de ole ge'man ain' crazy," said Ginger.

"Dear me, what has happened?" gasped Shanks.

"Oh, my, what fun!" yelled Cal.  
"That's a bully snap!" howled Pete.

"Come on, fellows, let's fish him out," shouted Ed.

Then all hands rushed down stairs pell-mell.

When they gathered about the Old Man he was sitting in the middle of the tub looking very mad,

"He won't be happy till he gets it," cried Shorty. "Use one kind of soap."

"Picture of baby in der tub, sifence a copy," snickered the Kid. "None ginniwine without our label."

"Wull, fo' de lan' sake, sah, wha' yo' doin' dere?"

"Jiminy Cricketts, I ain't had so much fun since I left school."

"Dear me, dear me, how fortunate there was something there."

By this time Josiah had recovered his breath but had lost his temper.

"Who put that tub of water at the foot of the stairs?" he sputtered. "You're all a lot of fat-heads, just nothing but chumps, that's all!"

"I won't give it, I won't, it's a put up job, a swindle, a cheat and I claim the stakes and I'm going right back to New York."

"Get up a little more steam, pop, and you can go all de way in der tub. That'll make a bully steam boat."

"Feel just like yer used ter when yer was young, don't yer, grandpop? Makes yer think of der time when de ole woman used ter give yer yer Sat'day night wash, hey?"

"I'll take dem stakes, Shanksy. Didn't I tell yer dat he couldn't slide from der top to der floor? He ain't got to der floor yet."

Then all hands except the manager and Mr. Burwick, indulged in a good old fashioned giggle.

"I won't give it, I won the bet, it's a regular swindle," sputtered Josiah, shaking his fist at the crowd.

The gang continued to laugh, however, until the Old Man, realizing what a ridiculous figure he must cut jumped out of the tub and skipped off to his room as mad as he could conveniently be and not explode.

Shorty did not want the Old Man's ten cases, having had more than that much worth of fun, and the money was returned.

That did not suit Josiah, however, for he was still mad, and still regarded the matter as a serious wager.

"I claim a foul," he explosively remarked to Shanks, and the money is mine. I won't take just my share; I want the entire stake."

"But, my dear sir, you don't need this money, and—"

"Bah! it ain't the money I care for; it's the principle of the thing. I really won that bet, and I'm going to—"

"But can't you see that the whole thing was nothing but a joke? George and Charlie don't care about the money; it was only the fun they were after."

"Well, there's been too many of these jokes, and I'm not going to stand any more of them. I'm going right back to New York to-day, and your old show can go to thunder for all I care."

Even Shanks, patient though he was, had begun to get tired of this everlasting threat.

"Very well, go back to New York, you old crank!" he sputtered, losing his temper at last. "Nobody wants you in the show, anyhow. You're only an old nuisance. A dummy in your place will do better than you will, you old chump!"

Then out went Shanks in a temper leaving the Old Man alone.

Then that silly old curmudgeon began to cry:

"Even Shanks goes back on me," he whimpered. "Those cruel sons of mine play jokes on me and nobody cares anything for me now."

Oh, dear, oh, dear, I'm a wretched old man, that's what I am."

Shorty and the Kid came in during the fracas, knowing that something was up from seeing Shanks go tearing out of the room in that bombshell fashion.

"Well, if you ain't a dandy!" snickered Shorty, "Does him want Georgy ter wipe his nosey posey, poor little deary?"

"If you don't give me a pain in der face ter look at yer," laughed the Kid. "Get out, you old cry baby. What yer done with yer nurse and yer bottle? Well, if you ain't der worst."

"Does it want its mommy, poor little dear?" sang out Shorty. "Well, so it should. There, there, tootsey-wootsey, don't ee ky, Georgie'll take der baby."

All this made the Old Man very mad, and he got right up on his ear.

He didn't want that kind of sympathy, he didn't, and he wasn't going to have it either."

"Get out of here!" he yelled, jumping to his feet.

Then he began to chuck things and make it pretty hot for those two little jokers.

Shorty got it with a hair brush, the Kid got a belt in the ear with a shoe, and all the movable articles in the room began to fly around at a great rate.

Those two runts dusted out of there, bursting with glee, for it was fun for them to see the Old Man in that state, even if they did get hit.

It was better to see him in a rage than in the dumps, and the symptoms were favorable and pointed to a speedy recovery.

"Pop's all right now," said Shorty, laughing as he got outside. "When he gets real mad like dat, dere's some hope for him."

"Ain't he a dandy, though, when he gets riled," chuckled the Kid. "Makes things just hum, doesn't he?"

"Bet yer life," and then the two comical runts faded away, for the Old Man was coming after them hot-footed.

The old gentleman did not say anything more about going to New York, he made it up with Shanks and matters were soon going on as smoothly as before.

The second week of the St. Louis engagement opened up all right, and, but for other dates, they might have stayed months in the place.

Josiah now began to think of revenge and he made up his mind to give those bad boys of his a regular soaker in the way of a snap, something that would take the starch out of them and make them leave him alone after that.

While he was thinking about it, however, Shorty was getting to work on another snap.

One morning there was a rehearsal and in the midst of it Shorty came running in suddenly from outside and said :

"Say, pop, go out and 'tend store in der box office, won't yer? Shanksy has gotter go ter Kansas to try to fix things for our opening. You can sell tickets easy enough."

"Really, George, I haven't done such a thing in years. You'd better send some one else."

Then the Kid spoke up, with his nose elevated :

"Don't let dat ole duffer go in der box office," he remarked. "He'll get tings all boxed up."

After that you could not have coaxed the Old Man out of the box.

"H'm! I guess I looked after money matters long before ever you were born," he snorted, making toward the stage entrance.

"Come on, we'll go through der house, pop," said Shorty, leading the way into the parquet.

Josiah took his station behind the window and waited for business.

Shorty returned to the stage to look after the rehearsal, and presently the fun began.

Two giggly girls came up to the window, and one of them said :

"Say, is there a mat'nee to-day, mister?"

"No, ma'm, not to-day, on Saturday," replied Josiah, politely.

"Why, ain't that funny? Don't youse peoples have Thursday mat'nees?"

"No, ma'm, only Saturday."

Then the other girl put her gum in one corner of her mouth and asked :

"What yer got for a quarter? Good reserved seats down stairs?"

"No ma'm, they are in the gallery. Orchestra seats cost you a dollar."

"Oh, my goodness, a dollar! Why, the 'Night Hawks' give you the best seat in the house for four bits. Say, this show ain't as good as that, is it?"

"I should say it was!" snapped the Old Man. "There isn't a better show on the road than ours."

"Any bally dancin' and tights in it?" asked the first girl.

"No, of course not! Don't you know what a minstrel show is?"

"Don't yer talk like that to me, you bald-headed old sneak!" retorted the giggler, getting mad. "My feller's a pliceman, and he'll give you the razzle-dazzle if you give me any lip."

"Ah, come on. I wouldn't go to the old show anyhow," said the other girl, and the two went away giggling.

The Old Man was just a bit rattled, but there was more to come.

An old man in a white choker and a funereal aspect presently walked up to the box, and asked:

"At what hour does the lecture begin? I suppose you admit the profession free?"

"Certainly, if we know 'em. What is your line?"

"My line, sir?" asked the solemn old gent.

"Yes. Your business. Are you dramatic, operatic, variety or minstrel?"

"Sir!" gasped the other. "I do not comprehend. I am a missionary, sir, and I wish to attend a lecture on the sinfulness of dancing, to be held—"

"Not here," muttered Josiah. "This is a theater."

"And aren't you ashamed, a man of your years and respectability, to be selling tickets for a theater?" asked the missionary. "Where do you expect to bring up, sir, in the end? Oh, my dear sir, consider the sinfulness of your ways and—"

"Well, it ain't my fault that I'm in the business yet," snapped Josiah. "I wanter to take a rest myself, but the boys were just set on taking the road again, no matter what I could say."

Then the solemn looking duck proceeded to make it hot for the Old Man in the way of a moral lecture.

He told how wicked it was to go to the theater, how the Old Man was setting a bad example to the young, how he ought to be ashamed of himself, and more to the same purpose.

Josiah wasn't going to let any one tell him what or what not his duty was, and he presently blurted out :

"I haven't got any time to waste on you. If you want to buy tickets, get out your money. If you don't, clear out. You are keeping folks waiting."

The old fellow went away, and a lady stepped up and whispered :

"Three seats in the orchestra, please."

"Yes, ma'm, three dollars," and the Old Man passed out the tickets and the change from ten dollars.

The lady counted the bills four or five times, looked at the tickets, put her money in her pocket-book, looked at the tickets again, and then left the line, crowding in again at the head in three seconds exclaiming excitedly :

"Why, these seats are for to-night!"

"Yes, ma'am, for to-night. That's what you wanted."

"Why, no I didn't; I want them for Saturday. Popper can't go to-night, you know, because this is his late night, but he can go on—"

"If you want them for Saturday I'll change them," snapped the Old Man. "You shouldn't have said you wanted them for to-night."

"But I didn't, you know, because I knew I couldn't go to-night, and of course I wouldn't ask for to-night. Didn't I say Saturday? I'm sure I thought that I did, for popper can go that night, and we are going to take Cousin George, who—"

"Can't give you the same tickets for Saturday, ma'am," grunted the Old Man, getting nervous. "Give you two rows further back. The others are taken."

"Well, I liked those, and I reckon popper would too, but if you haven't got them—Now, where did I put those tickets. Did you take them?"

"No'm, I did not. Please step aside till you find them. That'll be all right. I'll save you these."

The lady wasn't going to do anything so unreasonable as that, however.

No. She preferred to keep ten people waiting while she hunted in her pocket-book, in her satchel, in her handkerchief, and in her pocket for the missing pasteboards.

Finally she found them in her muff, and asked to see the plan so that she would know just where her seats were.

It took five minutes more to get rid of her after that, and the Old Man was beginning to get tearing mad by that time.

The next on the line was a solid-looking man, who was buying for a big party, and wanted thirty seats, all together if possible.

The Old Man picked out some seats, some scattered and some near, and said those were the best he had for that night.

The buyer was satisfied, however, and gave the Old Man a bill for a hundred dollars to change.

"Nothing smaller?"

"Yes."

"Then let me have it, please."

"How'll ten dollars strike you?"

"But I want thirty."

"Well, I haven't got it."

That evening, when the show was nearly over, Shanks came rushing into Shorty's dressing-room, and said very excitedly:

"Who took in a hundred-dollar bill to-day, George?"

"Don't know, Shanksy. Wot's der matter with it?"

Josiah was in the next room, and he called out:

"I took it this morning. A man bought thirty seats."

"Well, it's bad, that's what it is, and the show is out a hundred dollars."

Josiah came hurrying into the room half-dressed, exclaiming:

"But I tell you I never took it!" snapped Josiah.

"You must have," said Shanks, "for I found it in the cash."

"Dere goes dis week's salary."

"I wouldn't be such a gilly, I wouldn't."

"Get stuck on a ole fake like dat! Well, I wouldn't tell it, I wouldn't."

"But I tell you I didn't take it. The bill I took was good."

"Kin yer swear to it, pop?"

No, he wouldn't, and, come to think of it, he was a bit confused, not to say rattled, having had a lot of cranks bothering him just before that.



"Yes, gentlemen, I repeat that this is one of the proudest moments of my life," continued the Old Man. "When I see around me the shining lights of science, the arts, of the stage, and of that grand pioneer movement which seeks to make a home for the civilized world where now there is but a howling wilderness, I must say that the occasion does me honor, and I am doubly proud to say it."

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"You didn't ask me. You asked me if I had any smaller money."

If there hadn't been ladies on that line Josiah would have said something strong, but he refrained and handed over the change.

The man went away, and Josiah sold tickets to four or five people, having no more trouble.

Then up came Shanks himself, who said:

"Ah, you in the box, Mr. Burwick? I thought George would look after it."

"I wish he had!" growled Josiah.

"Well, I'll believe you now," said Shanks, coming in.

"But I thought you had gone to Kansas City?"

"Not at all. I stepped around the corner to see a man on business. He sent for me, and I had to go."

"George said you had to go to Kansas City."

"Oh, no, indeed," and then the manager smiled and passed out some tickets to a lady on the other side of the window.

The Old Man grunted and went away, but could not find Shorty, the rehearsal having come to an end.

"Let me see it. I guess I can tell good money from bad. Who told you it was counterfeit?"

"Look for yourself," said Shanks, Shorty passing the bill to Mr. Burwick.

There wasn't the slightest doubt about its being bad.

In fact it wasn't a treasury note at all, but just an advertisement got up to look like a hundred dollar bill, but it wouldn't have fooled a blind man.

"I never took that thing!" gasped Josiah. "You must think I'm an idiot."

"That leaves you no salary dis week," said the Kid, who had entered.

"Didn't think yer was so full as that, pop," said Shorty.

"The cash is a hundred dollars short," groaned Shanks. "I don't see how you come to do it, Mr. Burwick."

"Oh, pop got to mashing some of der St. Louis girls and got rattled, I guess," chuckled Charlie.

"Why, my boy Petey wouldn't ha' got stuck on dat bill," snickered George.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to lose it," muttered Shanks, "as I'm responsible for all the money that comes in."

"H'm, I'll pay it myself," snorted Josiah. "I guess I ain't going to let you lose anything through my carelessness, but if you catch me selling tickets again for this show just let me know."

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. BURWICK did not lose that hundred dollars after all, though he thought he would have to.

The fake note had been passed in, sure enough, and the Old Man took it, and there the snap ended.

Those thirty seats were paid for and Shorty knew the man who bought them.

Shorty had put a friend of his up to the dodge, the seats being regularly bought and the money turned into the treasury, though not at once.

Shanks had been sent out of the way just so the snap could be worked upon Josiah and the giggling girls, the missionary and the absent-

minded woman were all fakes to get the Old Man rattled, these characters being impersonated by some of the minstrel boys, at Shorty's suggestion.

The show closed at St. Louis in a couple of days and went on to Kansas City where they started in on a week's engagement with the most flattering prospects.

The Old Man thought it was about time to play that return snap on Shorty and the Kid, though he did not grasp the fact that Shorty had just worked off one on him in addition to several others for which he sought revenge.

However, he presently evolved something which he thought good and proceeded to give it sea room at once.

It required some outside assistance to work it properly, but Josiah was willing to expend a little money in order to punish his son and grandson, and stage hands are never so well paid that they will refuse to take extra money on occasion.

One night as Shorty and the Kid, all dressed, were about to take their places on the stage, they were seized, one in each entrance, by mysterious hands and suddenly bundled out of the way.

In another moment the curtain went up and there was the Old Man in the middle, the singers in a half-circle and the musicians on the raised platform, but no end men.

Shorty and the Kid were missing from their accustomed places, but the audience said nothing, expecting that some surprise was in store for them.

"We will begin the evening's entertainment with the overture," remarked the Old Man, and the orchestra tackled "Poet and Peasant" in fine style.

"Chorus from the opera of *Fra Diavolo*," said the Old Man, and all hands began to sing.

Then Josiah looked at the empty chairs and said:

"I do not see our friends this evening, but I have two dummies who are perfectly capable of taking their places."

There was a shout at this, for the laugh was upon those jolly jokers.

"Bring in the boxes containing the wax figures," said the Old Man to some one in the wings.

Two men entered at either side, each couple bearing a trunk between them.

"Take out the dummies," said the Old Man, with a broad smile.

Then the trunks were opened.

The birds did not begin to sing, as in the case of the uncovering of the pie before his majesty, however.

The trunks were empty, and a blank look appeared on Josiah's facile features.

The audience howled again, and began to applaud.

The Old Man began to feel like the man fired out of his house for non-payment of rent; he wasn't in it.

Suddenly, from the rear of the parquet two voices were heard.

"Dem dummies didn't work, did dey, pop?"

"Don't yer want us ter help yer, Old Man?"

Then Shorty and the Kid, in burnt cork and dress suits, came down the aisle toward the stage.

Josiah's little snap had failed to connect through the treachery of his accomplices.

Shorty and the Kid had been bundled into the trunks all right, but then the stage hands had a chance to make more money, and the jokers were let out.

They tumbled to the Old Man's scheme, and determined to get the laugh on him.

They therefore told the men to take in the trunks, as agreed upon, and in the meantime they skipped around to the front of the house.

"Ah, there!" they warbled, as they waltzed down the aisle.

Two ushers helped them to get on the stage, and then they executed a few jig steps, and finally took their seats.

"Pop thinks he's awfully funny," said Shorty, addressing the house, "but he ain't."

"Dat's der time we cornered him," added the Kid. "He thought he had der turn on us, but we sneaked out."

"Yer gotter get up early to fool me and Kiddy, bet yer socks," said Shorty.

"Putty good dummies, ain't we, folkses?" chirped the Kid.

The laugh was on the Old Man this time, and he felt mad enough to stand on his head and kick his own brains out.

"Say, pop, what's der best way ter raise wool?" asked Shorty.

"Lift you up by your hair," snorted the Old Man.

"Dat's putty good for you, pop, and here's another one. What side of a mule do yer ride on?"

"The outside, of course."

"Nixey, dat ain't it."

"Well, then, what side?"

"Most folks find dat it's der left side when they try it first, pop. Ain't dat right?"

"Love's golden dream," sighed Josiah, glancing at Mr. Montmorenci.

"Soy, grandpop," cried Charlie, when the song was ended, "who was der strongest man in the whole world?"

"Sampson has that reputation, I believe."

"No, he don't. I'm stronger dan him."

"Why so?"

"Why, he brought down der house once and it killed him, but I kin do it every night and eat my supper after."

"I kin tell you a kind o' house yer can't draw," said Shorty.

"What kind is dat?"

"A lighthouse."

"No, and I don't want ter. Soy?"

"Say it yerself."

"Where do niggers go when dey die?"

"Up in der gallery."

"Ah, get out!"

"Well, dat's der nigger heaven, ain't it?"

"Dey don't go there, I tell you."

"Where do dey go when dey die, den?"

"To deir own funerals, of course. Where did yer expect dey went?"

"Sweet evening bells," remarked the old duffer in the middle.

"Yes, I like the evening belles myself," said Shorty. "Cause den dey're all fixed up purty and have got their gaslight complexions on and look so stunning."

"Don't interrupt," said Josiah. "These bells are not girls, they are bells."

"Scuse me, but I thought they was. Let me sing you about an evening belle I met the other day."

Then, without further ado, the little runt got off something like this:

"OH, I met a girl the other night  
With lovely auburn curls,  
Her cheeks were red, her eyes were bright;  
She was a queen among the girls.  
She looked too sweet for this rude earth  
So graceful as a fairy.  
I knew she was of noble birth,  
She was so light an airy.  
I thought it was the sweetest dream  
And I longed to hear her speak,  
When some one dropped a plate of cream  
Right on her damask cheek.  
Then out she spoke, my passion fled  
At the words my angel spoke.  
I've a darned good mind to punch your head,  
You onary clumsy bloke!"

Then Mr. Smith warbled about those sweet evening bells, and the performance moved on swimmingly.

Shorty had not intended to get off any gags on his poor old dad that evening, but since Josiah had been so fresh, the little runt concluded to get up an impromptu one just for the fun of it.

They were doing a farce later on, in which all the Old Man had to do was to look out of a window and shout.

He had done the thing before and nothing had happened, and therefore he suspected nothing this time.

Behind the window was a ladder on which he stood, and when the scene was closed in he came down.

This time, however, as he was leaning out of the window and shouting, he suddenly realized that the ladder had been taken away.

The frame of the flat was strong enough to hold him, but he did not think so, and he began to yell louder than there was any occasion for.

He kicked also, and presently his feet came through the side of the house, the flat being an old one and the cloth covering it being thin.

"Hi! hi! let me down!" he bawled, kicking and struggling.

The house paid more attention to him than it did to the piece now, and roars of laughter were heard.

The illusion of the scene was spoiled, of course, for people do not generally kick holes in houses, but that did not matter a bit.

The thing was funny and everybody laughed, and as people go to minstrel shows for the sake of laughing that was all right.

Josiah did not look at it in that light, however, for he was scared and wanted to get down.

"Hi, hi! Help, help!" he yelled, kicking more vigorously than ever.

Then, all of a sudden, he felt that the mimic house was falling and he yelled louder than ever.

Down it went, flat on the stage, but not too suddenly to do any hurt and the old man was not injured.

In fact, a couple of scene shifters had lowered the thing instead of putting up the ladder, at Shorty's suggestion.

Josiah rolled away from the wreck and got up shaking his fist and prepared to make an indignant speech.

Just as he opened his mouth, however, the two halves of a flat caught him, one on each side, and he was pinned fast.

Then there was some more laughing which did not cease until a front scene was shoved on and the Old Man was hidden from sight and then released.

It was during the Kansas City engagement and towards the end of it that this thing happened.

One morning Mr. Burwick found the following nice little note among the letters placed at his plate at the breakfast table:

"Mr. Josiah Burwick is expected to make one of a small party to dinner at 5 P. M., at the St. James.

M. T. BUCKETTE.

"H'm—ha, that ought to be very nice," said the Old Man musingly. "The St. James is a very fine hotel, I believe."

"Bet yer life it is," chimed in Shorty. "Regular swallow-tailed place. Are you in on this, pop?"

"Why, yes, I have an invitation to dine there with Mr. Buckette this evening."

"So have I, pop," said Shorty. "Covers for eight, very swell and all that. I guess der Kid has got a invite by der way he's smiling. Are yer, Chawles?"

"Course I are. Buckette and me is good friends, we is."

"But who is he, George?" asked Josiah. "Have I ever met him?"

"Guess not, pop, but he's a swell, he is, got lots of money, don't do nothin', owns real estate, interested in shows, base ball, racing and all that, likes to give swell dinners to swell folks, puts on no end of side, but a jolly good feller. Better take it in, Pop."

"Cert, you had," added Charlie. "He thinks lots o' you, he does, told me so, yesterday. Dis'll be the tip-toppest thing of der season, pop. We can skip at de end and go right on der stage. Better not let it slide."

At five o'clock Mr. Burwick, in dazzling full dress, presented himself at the St. James, inquired for Mr. Buckette, and was shown into an ante room, where he found seven other gentlemen, including Shorty and the Kid.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Burwick," said a tall, pleasant-looking gentleman, advancing and taking Josiah's hand. "I am Mr. Buckette, these are my friends."

The Old Man bowed, and the host, as Josiah believed him to be, introduced his friends.

"Mr. Cicero Stuffer, professor of the University of Missouri; Pliny Grubber, M. A., P. B. G. the famous naturalist; Mr. Nimrod Hunter, the finest shot west of the Mississippi, and the Hon. W. H. H. Slopperton, better known as Bad Lands William, the celebrated scout and explorer. Gentlemen, this is my esteemed friend, Mr. Josiah Burwick, whom we all delight to honor."

Josiah bowed and shook hands all around, feeling as proud as a peacock.

Professor Stuffer did not look like a learned man, although he had a very bald head, and Mr. Grubber looked more like a pawnbroker than a naturalist, while Mr. Hunter might have been a broker instead of a crack shot, and Bad Lands Williams had nothing of the ideal scout about him, not even the flowing hair and tawny mustache, which one naturally expects in such celebrities.

Presently a very swell head waiter appeared and announced that dinner was served, the guests filing out in pairs, Mr. Buckette and Mr. Burwick going together, Shorty taking the Kid, the professor walking with the scout, and the big hunter hooking on to the crack shot.

"We must give you the seat of honor, Mr. Burwick," said Mr. Buckette, waving his hand toward the head of the table and taking the foot himself.

Josiah had the scout on his right and the professor on his left. Mr. Buckette was flanked by Shorty and the Kid, and the great hunter and the famous naturalist took the remaining places.

The table was big enough to give everybody plenty of room and was set out with the whit-

est of damask, the most shining glass and the finest silver that could be found, a big mound of choice flowers occupying the center of the table, while a pink wax candle was placed at each plate.

Everything was very swell, the waiters moving noiselessly about and conversing in whispers, nothing being done to offend the refined taste of even the first of the cultured four hundred.

The head waiter approached Mr. Burwick and said respectfully:

"We have some very choice sardines, sir, of our own importation. I can recommend them as an appetizer."

Mr. Burwick smiled, and the gentlemanly servitor whispered his orders to his subordinates.

After the opening act came some choice clams on ice, and then a clear soup served in cups, accompanied by a light wine, Mr. Burwick being consulted as to the propriety of producing it.

"Your very good health, Mr. Burwick," said Mr. Buckette. "Gentlemen, our friend's good health."

"May I never shoot another buffalo if I don't drink that."

"I'd sooner take that toast than kill forty Indians."

"Science pays its respects to you, my very dear sir."

"Pleased to drink your health, sir."

"Gentlemen, you honor me, indeed you do," said Josiah, blushing like a giddy young girl.

That polite and ubiquitous head waiter touched his elbow at this moment and whispered:

"Would you like a little Columbia river salmon? I can recommend it."

"Why, yes, I shall be delighted," smiled the Old Man, and the fish, placed on a napkin and garnished with parsley and slices of lemon, was brought on, Josiah serving it.

"I must compliment you on your good taste in ordering good things, my dear sir," smiled Mr. Burkette, from the foot of the table. "You are a bon vivant of the first water."

After the fish, the head waiter suggested grape fruit, in glass cups, and then an olive, to all of which the Old Man acquiesced.

There was nothing mean about that dinner, you bet.

A couple of beautifully browned roast wild ducks and a salad came next, Mr. Burwick being consulted as to the propriety of having them, as well as some excellent claret of a forgotten vintage, very fine and large.

All hands enjoyed that dinner, and witty remarks flew around like sparks from a telegraph wire in a thunder storm.

The ducks gave way to some of the dandiest Cumberland ham you ever ate, fairly melting in the mouths of the feasters and then came some green beans, piping hot, garnished with crusty croutons, and presently supplemented by stewed celery heads and snipe done to a turn washed down with some extra dry fizz with a gold ulster on the bottle.

The Old Man had not eaten such a swell dinner in months and he wished that it might last till morning.

He was in high feather, too, for he was consulted about everything, even to the kind of olives, the particular brand of wine, the proper sauce to be served with each dish and the exact quantity of bread to be consumed.

Wouldn't you like another bottle of wine, Mr. Burwick?" asked that awfully polite waiter presently.

Why, yes, Josiah thought another bottle would go first rate, and he forthwith ordered it.

Then came some oyster patties, at the waiter's suggestion, flanked by salantines and some cold beef with jelly, all of which were very nice.

Time was wearing on by this time, but there was still an opportunity to discuss another course consisting of a pati de foie gras with truffles and some red hot young carrots, on the side, as Shorty expressed it.

Then that terribly affable and gentlemanly head waiter suggested a roast loin of pork, sauce Hollandaise, and Josiah agreed that it would be very nice.

Then an omelette souffle and a glass of rum came on, and after that some ices, a bit of Gorgonzola cheese and a biscuit, and some excellent coffee.

Now came the speech making.

Mr. Burwick arose, good humor shining from every pore, and beaming upon the crowd, said:

"Gentlemen, I am pleased to have met you all, and feel that this is one of the happiest moments of my life."

"You do us proud, pop," said Shorty, with a laugh.

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. M. T. Buckette, with his face on the broad grin.

"Rather dine with you, Mr. Burwick, than have killed Sitting Bull."

"Finest spread I've had in years," said the hunter. "Beats elephant trunk and camel hump all out."

"Here's my regards," said the bug hunter.

"Yes, gentlemen, I repeat that this is one of the proudest moments of my life," continued the Old Man. "When I see around me the shining lights of science, the arts, of the stage, and of that grand pioneer movement which seeks to make a home for the civilized world where now there is but a howling wilderness, I must say, that the occasion does me honor, and I am doubly proud to say it."

"We have some very choice cigars," insinuated that wily head waiter. "Perhaps you would like some, and another bottle of wine."

"Certainly, certainly," whispered Josiah. "Gentlemen, I must beg you to have a cigar with me, and then I would like to hear from my polite and entertaining host, Mr. Buckette."

Time was creeping on, as it were, but the fun wasn't all over yet, by any means.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

MR. BUCKETTE, being pressed, made a speech, starting off as follows:

"Gentlemen all, and particularly my old friend, Mr. Burwick, it does me honor to be called upon to address you, unused as I am to public speaking, and not expecting to be called upon this evening!"

"Dat's a good send-off!" piped up the Kid.

"Sounds old," added Shorty, "but Chauncey Depew allers says der same thing."

"Sh! George, don't interrupt," muttered the Old Man.

"I feel, however, gentlemen, that my appellation is somewhat of a misnomer, for, far from being the M. T. Buckette, I am at present a very full bucket—full with the generous fare with which our good friend has provided us—and full also of pride, happiness and general good will."

"Hear, hear!" cried all, while the glasses clinked and the smoke wreaths curled gracefully upward.

"My esteemed friend, Professor Stuffer, who has by no means belied his name on this occasion, will now sing one of his select operatic melodies, after which, Dr. Grubber, well named that, will oblige with a comic recitation."

"Hooray!" shouted everybody.

Just before the song began, however, the head waiter entered, and in a soft, very aristocratic and most apologetic voice, said:

"Pardon me, gentlemen, but there is a message for Mr. George and Mr. Charles Burwick. It is important, or I would not think of disturbing you."

Then he handed Shorty a note, which the latter showed to the Old Man.

It was from Shanks, and ran thusly:

"DEAR GEORGE,—Must see you and Charlie at the theater at once. SHANKS."

"Sorry to go, gents, but I go ter, me and der Kid," said Shorty, rising. "See yer later."

Then he and Charlie skipped and the festivities proceeded.

In a few minutes, however, the Chesterfieldian head waiter appeared again with a note for Bad Lands William.

"What's this?" muttered the scout. "Called to the frontier to rescue Buffalo Bill—must leave by first train! Well—well, this is sudden. Excuse me, gents, but I haven't a second to lose."

In two shakes the swallowtails appertaining to the coat of Mr. Bad Lands William, otherwise the Hon. W. H. H. Slopperton, were in a horizontal position as he glided from the room.

The famous hunter then proceeded to narrate some of his experiences in the wilds of New Jersey, and was full of his topic, when there came another interruption.

"Great Scott!" cried Mr. Grubber. "I have forgotten to feed my seven-legged, crimson-beaked spider since last night, and he must be nearly starved. Excuse me, gentlemen, but this must be attended to at once."

Then out went the naturalist, and there were now, besides Mr. Burwick, only Mr. Buckette, the professor, and the crack shot.

Five minutes passed and the professor received a telegram.

"Ha! what's this? A call to the chair of the Philological Instoot of Nevada!" muttered his

learned joblots. "Excuse me, friends, but this needs my immediate attention."

Out he went also, and the intelligent head waiter suggested another bottle of wine and some more cigars.

"Really, I ought to go and see what has become of Grubber," said Mr. Hunter in a few minutes. "I am afraid that his spider may have bitten him, and I know the danger of such things. You must really excuse me."

"Pray don't mention it," said Mr. Burwick. "I can readily understand your solicitude for your friend."

In the course of five minutes more, Mr. M. T. Buckette arose, looked anxiously around, and said:

"It's really too bad that they don't return. I must go and see what detains them. Make yourself quite comfortable, Mr. Burwick."

Then away he skipped, and the Old Man was left alone.

He emptied his glass, finished his cigar, and then began to wonder why no one came.

After that he suddenly thought to look at his watch.

Great guns! It was a quarter to eight, and he had to go to the theater and get ready for his part in the show.

He jumped up, and at that instant the head waiter entered.

"There is nothing more you want, sir?" he asked deferentially.

"No, nothing, thanks. Tell the gentlemen when they return that I was called away on business."

"You will look over the bill before you go and see if it's all right?" asked that most attentive servitor.

The bill!

Yes, that was just what the gentleman gave him, and a good long one it was.

"What does this mean?" gasped Josiah, putting on his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Dinner for eight, with wine and cigars, two hundred and seventeen dollars and fifty-five cents."

These were the figures, \$217.55, in good, plain characters at the bottom of the account, sure enough.

"But you shouldn't bring this to me," muttered the old man. "I was invited to dine with Mr. Buckette."

"Pardon me, sir, but you ordered everything and I was told to look to you."

"I ordered everything! I didn't order the first thing!"

"It grieves me to dispute the word of a gentleman older than myself, sir," answered that suave official, but I must beg leave to tell you that you did."

"What did I order?" snapped Josiah getting mad.

The hors d'oeuvre the soup, the fish, the salad, the entrees, the game, the roast, the entremets, the dessert, the cheese, the coffee, the cigars and the wine."

"But I didn't order them at all!" shrieked Josiah. "You asked me if I would have them."

"And you ordered them. That is the custom. If you had not desired them you could have declined them. You certainly did order the dinner, sir, and you will find the bill perfectly correct."

"Josiah could not get it through his head yet."

"I ordered nothing," he yelled. "I came here by invitation."

"Pardon me, but you ordered everything. I took no orders from anyone but you, sir, and here is the bill."

"I won't pay it!" snapped Josiah. "It's outrageous and I won't pay it."

The other was perfectly calm and icy all this time.

"The bill is not excessive," he said. "You have had the best the market affords. You have had Little Neck clams and Columbia River salmon, and strawberries and young celery in the dead of winter, and the very best of wines. It is not often that a better dinner is served."

"That's all right!" snarled Josiah. "I am not finding fault with the dinner, which was excellent, nor with the charge, which is reasonable, but it's preposterous to make me pay it."

"But you ordered it," reiterated the gentleman with the bill.

"I did not, and I am not going to pay the bill!" vociferated the Old Man, banging his fat fist on the table and making all the wine glasses dance.

"Very well," and the head waiter departed.

Josiah was about to do the same, when in came the proprietor, the head waiter, and three or four other waiters, white and black.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded the boss of the place, who was a big fellow with bushy whiskers and a fat stomach. "Why don't you pay your bill like a gentleman, and not make all this fuss?"

"I was invited here to dine and I won't pay a cent," blustered Josiah.

Then they all got at him at once.

"You won't leave the house till you do."

"I will swear that the bill is correct."

"I heard de ge'man o'dah ev'ryting."

"I shall hold you responsible, sir."

"I protest that the bill is right."

"You ordered the whole dinner."

Then they were all talking at once, the head

"That's outrageous," sputtered the Old Man. "Send for Mr. Buckette, Professor Stuffer, Mr. Hunter and the Hon. Mr. Slopperton and ask them if I was not invited to dinner."

"I don't know any such gentlemen. These are citizens of Kansas City, and well known to me, and you invited them to dine with you to boom the show."

"Yes, and the curtain will be up in five minutes, and I'm not ready," gasped Josiah.

"You can't go till you pay the bill," said the landlord.

Josiah saw that he was in for it, and no mistake.

"I don't carry two hundred dollars around in

dignant, but he suspected Shorty of having put up a job on him, and he wanted to know all about it.

He got to the theater in a few moments, and then Ginger took him in hand and fixed him up in a jiffy, so that the performance was not delayed more than ten minutes.

He did not have time to say anything then, but when the first part was over he tackled Shorty in his dressing-room and asked.

"Did you tell the man at the St. James that I was to pay the bill for the dinner?"

"Me?" said Shorty. "Course not. Why was you doing that, pop? I thought Buckette invited us."



"What's the matter with you?" demanded the boss of the place, who was a big fellow with bushy whiskers and a fat stomach. "Why don't you pay your bill like a gentleman, and not make all this fuss?" "I was invited here to dine and I won't pay a cent," blustered Josiah.

waiter pointing to the bill, the other waiters backing him up, and the proprietor gesticulating like a windmill gone mad.

"For heaven's sakes shut up!" howled Josiah at length when most crazy.

Silence fell upon the scene, and then the landlord said:

"Your name is Burwick, isn't it?"

"Certainly."

"Then you ordered that dinner for eight, and you've got to pay it, two hundred and seventeen dollars and fifty-five cents."

"But I tell you I did not order it!"

"And I say you did! My head waiter went to you, as you were at the head of the table, and you ordered the entire dinner."

That was true enough as the Old Man realized, but he knew there was a swindle somewhere, and he meant to kick.

"I was invited, I tell you," he protested, "and I have the invitation in my pocket now."

He did not have it, however, having left it at home.

"That won't do," said the proprietor. "I know these gentlemen, and they all told me as they went out that you would settle the bill."

"I don't carry two hundred dollars around in my waistcoat pocket," he growled, "Call in the morning."

"That won't do, Mr. Burwick," said the other. "Give me an order on the box office. Your signature will be quite sufficient."

"That's very shabby of Buckette," muttered the Old Man. "I did not think that Professor Grubber or the Hon. Mr. Slopperton would do such things, and I'm sure I never expected Mr. Nimrod Hunter or Professor Stuffer to descend to such baseness."

"I don't know what you are talking about," vociferated the landlord. "The gentlemen who dined with you are prominent citizens of Kansas City, and there isn't a professor or an honorable among them. Come, I want that order. You are keeping me waiting and I have lots of business."

The Old Man could never have forced his way out against that burly landlord, to say nothing of the polite head waiter and his assistants.

He yielded gracefully to the inevitable, therefore, signed an order on Shanks for the amount of the bill, ordered a carriage and drove like mad to the theater.

He would not have gone at all, he was so in-

"Didn't you leave just so I would be alone?" demanded Josiah. "It was all a practical joke, that's what it was."

"You saw der note Shanksy sent to me and Kiddy, didn't yer?" asked Shorty. "We had ter come around and see about some new music."

"Yes, and everybody else went away after that and left me to pay the bill," snarled the very mad old duffer.

"Dey did, pop?"

"Yes, they did."

"Ho! den it must ha' been a reg'lar put up job by Buckette, dad," laughed Shorty.

"There wasn't any Buckette, or Stuffer, or Grubber, or Hunter, or Bad Lands William at all," sputtered Josiah. "Those names were assumed."

"Well, I'll be blowed!"

He was very innocent of course, Shorty was, and was very much surprised.

"Yes, and the landlord wanted me to pay the bill."

"I just wouldn't pay it, pop."

"But I have paid it!" stormed the Old Man.

"Oho, you have, hey?"

"Well, I gave 'em an order on Shanks. I couldn't get away without."

Shorty laughed and then said soberly:

"Send around and tell Shanks not to pay it, pop. Dat'll fix 'em."

Mr. Burwick did so, but he was too late.

Shanks had already paid over the money for the dinner to the landlord of the St. James.

Josiah sputtered and threatened to have the man arrested, but he thought better of it the next day.

In fact, upon reflection, and from remarks that he heard when the speakers did not know that he was listening, he finally tumbled to the going."

"DEAR SHORTY,—Meet me at the theater this morning, I've got a pleasant surprise for you."

"AN OLD CHUM."

"Well, I don't know who dat is," muttered George. "Why don't he give his name? Dat's only a fake, dat is. I ain't going."

"Going where?" asked Kate.

"To der theayter. Somebody wants ter see me, but I don't know who it is."

"Why don't you go and find out? He says there's a pleasant surprise," for Kate had read the note which Shorty passed to her.

"Well, he'll be surprised then, for I ain't

"Where is he?"

"Gone around to the theater."

Once more Shorty went to the theater, this time to the front entrance.

Shanks was standing there smoking a cigar, but no one else was visible.

"Man been looking for you, George," said the manager.

"Who was he?"

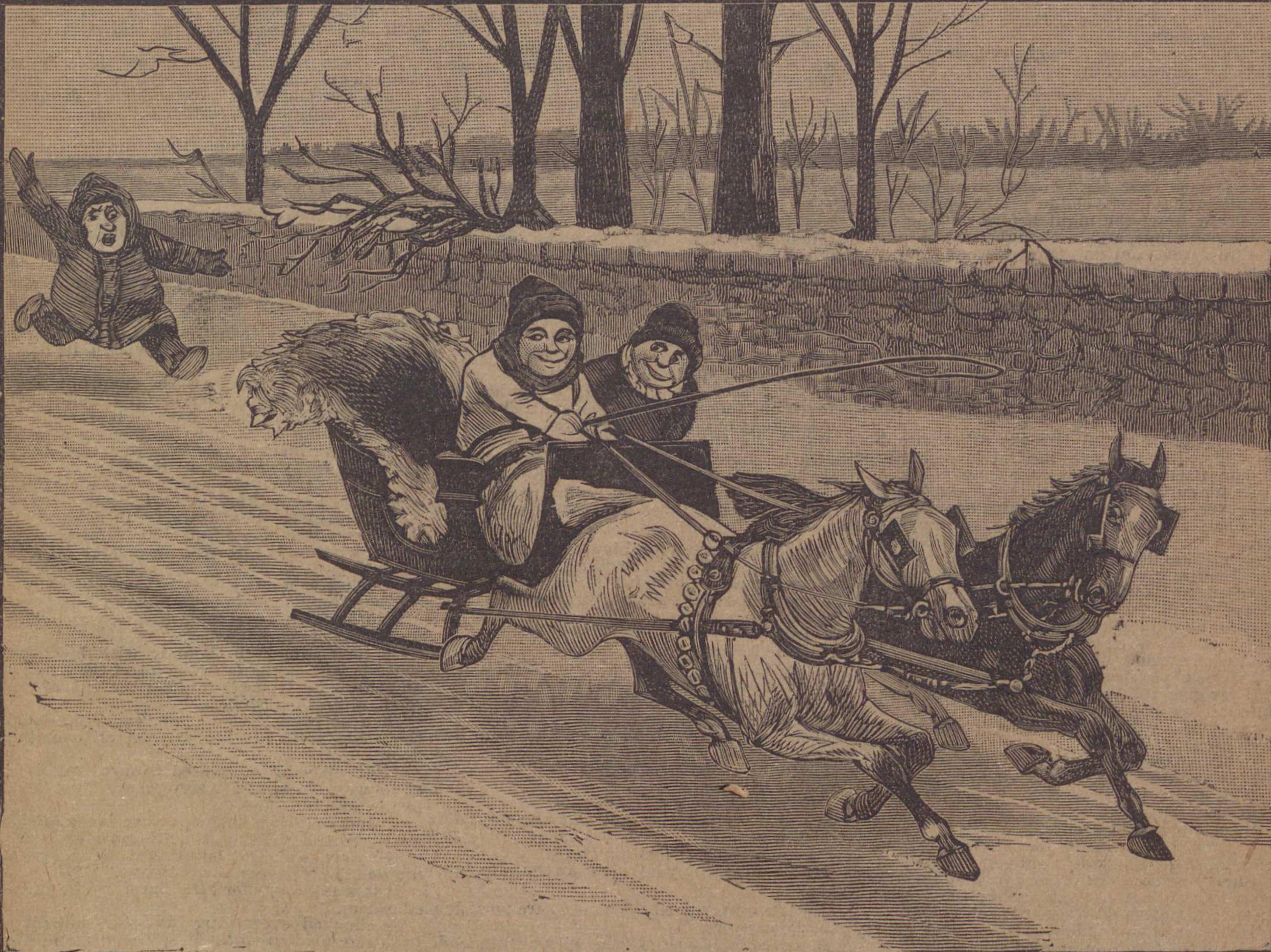
"I'll never tell. Don't know him."

"Where did he go?"

"Over to the Nebraska House."

That was a hotel across the street; a place Shorty had not yet visited.

Over he went, and when he got in, he asked:



Up he jumped and began bowling along the snowy road as fast as his fat legs could carry him. "Hold on—don't go away and leave me!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. Neither Shorty nor that wicked Kid paid any more heed to his cries than they would if they had been deaf, dumb and blind.

fact that the whole thing was a put up job on him.

Then, more than ever, he resolved to go straight back home.

He declared his intention just before the show that night.

"All right, pop," said Shorty, "go on if you like, but dere ain't any trains runnin' out o' Chicago now; der roads are all blocked up with snow."

That was true enough, and the storm was working west besides.

Shanks got his party out of Kansas City and up to Omaha, just in time, however, and they opened in the latter city to big business.

As he could not carry out his threat of going home, the Old Man concluded to pay off Shorty and the Kid for their many jokes on him, and to do the thing up brown this time.

There was no use in getting any one to help him, for he had been sold out the last time he had tried that dodge, and so this trip he determined to play his own hand.

On the second morning of their stay in Omaha when Shorty came down to breakfast he found a letter on his plate which read thus:

"If he can't say who he is, I wouldn't either," said Josiah.

Shorty did not tumble to any snap, but he finally made up his mind that he would go to the theater after all. He put on his fur ulster and big cap, got inside a pair of warm gloves, stuck a cigar in his mouth and set out.

When he got to the theater, he found it closed, none of the men having arrived.

"I don't see nobody," he said to himself. "I knowed dat thing was a fake."

Then he sauntered into a neighboring tavern to warm himself inside and out, and here the proprietor said:

"Party looking for you just now; said he'd go around to the stage door and wait."

"Do you know him?"

"No, never saw him before."

Out went Shorty and hurried around to the stage door of the theater.

There was no one there, and he went into another place to get warm.

"Man looking for you just now," said the proprietor.

"Who was it?"

"I don't know."

"Feller been here looking for me this morning?"

"Yes, and he went out mad."

"Where did he go?"

"I sent him to the theater."

Back to the theater went Shorty, finding the front door open, but no one in sight.

In he went, but had hardly stepped inside when he was suddenly seized and fired out down the steps, across the walk and into a big snow drift.

"There, you duffer, make me go trotting all over for you, will you?" cried an angry voice. "You can't make a sucker out of me, you can't."

Shorty looked up out of his bed of snow and saw a big six footer, who was a total stranger to him, squaring off as if ready for a fight.

"Wat's der matter wid you, stranger?" asked Shorty, as Shanks came running out.

"You're George Burwick, aren't you?" asked the Nebraskan.

"Dat's what I allus thought."

"And you wrote me a letter telling me to meet you here this morning, and then sent me hustling all over town looking for you?"

"Did I?" asked Shorty. "Well, I didn't know it if I did."

"There must be some mistake," said Shanks. "Mr. Burwick doesn't know you at all, sir, and couldn't have written you a letter."

"Oh, he couldn't, eh?" said the other. "Well, he did, that's all. My name's Meacham, and I'm a fighter, and this chump sent me a challenge, and then made me go all over town after him, and I'll lick you both if you say much."

Then he chucked a letter on the walk, and went off very mad.

Shanks picked up the letter, and read:

"George Burwick will meet Tommy Meacham at the theatre to arrange for knocking him out to-morrow at nine."

"Why, that's your father's handwriting," said Shanks.

"Tally one for pop," laughed Shorty. "Wonder how he worked up der snap. It's great."

## CHAPTER XX.

SHORTY found out eventually how the Old Man had worked up that last snap on him, and he gave the latter a good deal of credit for it.

It seemed that Mr. Burwick had seen the man Meacham, who claimed to be a prize-fighter, in the hotel the night before, putting on a good many lugs, and he thought that he might get up a good snap on Shorty through him.

He had written the note to the fighter and also one to George, and had then gone to a lot of places in the neighborhood of the theater, and told the proprietors that if any one called for Mr. Burwick he had gone to such a place.

That is how Shorty and Meacham happened to do so much chasing around that morning.

The fighter did the most of it, and it made him mad because he thought the whole thing was a job on him.

Shorty did not find this out all at once, but by degrees, and he gave the Old Man credit for having fixed up a pretty good snap on him.

As for curing him of working off other snaps, however, there was no such likelihood.

When Shorty turned up his stumpy little toes to the blooming daisies, he would cease to play rackets, but not previously.

"I must give one to pop for that," he remarked to Charlie, when he had learned all about the Meacham snap. "He's getting too gay for an old duck of his age."

"You ain't no chicken yerself, dad," said the Kid with a grin.

"None o' yer sass, young feller," said Shorty. "If yer give me any lip I'll take yer across my knee and wallop yer."

"Maybe yer t'ink dat's a kneesy job, dad, but I guess not."

"I'll call around to-morrer for der map o' dat, Kiddy," said Shorty, "I ain't got time now."

"I'll tell you a good one to play on grandpop," said Charlie.

"Let's have it straight."

"Put a bent pin in his chair. He's new enough to get stuck on a old gag like dat."

Shorty winked the other eye, and remarked something about the Kid being too fresh to keep long unless the weather grew colder.

However, that evening, at the theater, Shorty fixed up the Old Man in good shape.

There was no use asking the old fellow to play in any farces, for he would not do it and that settled it, and so something else had to be thought of.

After the first part Shorty and the Kid in their dressing-room began a discussion which the Old Man could not fail to hear, his room being the next one to theirs.

"We'll have ter do something ourselves ter fill up der gap," said Shorty.

"Yer might get grandpop to sing a ballad in Castle's place," suggested Charlie.

"Ah, go on, pop can't sing for a cent," snorted Shorty.

"Well, he ain't very good at it, but he might do on a pinch, now that the other feller is sick."

"Ah, get out, he don't know any ballads, and he couldn't sing 'em if he did know any."

"Well, he'd make der folks laugh, anyhow."

"Don't believe he could do that even. He ain't no good except to sit in der middle."

Now Josiah fancied that he could sing a ballad as well as any one, and he did not like this sort of talk.

He just meant to show those two runts that he not only could sing, but that he meant to sing, whether or no.

If they had gone to him on their hunkies and with weeps in their eyes, begging him to help them over the gap in the programme by singing

a ballad, it is more than likely that he would have flatly refused.

When they said he mustn't sing, however, it was another matter.

Presently they heard him clearing his voice, and then singing a line or two of "Come into the Garden, Maude," a ballad that used to be popular some forty years ago.

Shorty gave the Kid a wink, and they both hurried into Josiah's room.

"Wot's der matter, pop—are you took sick?"

"Dat's an awful cough you are got, grandpop. Yer orter take something for it."

"I haven't any cough," said the Old Man, spitefully.

"Didn't I hear you barking just now? Of course I did."

"I was singing, sir, and I'm going to sing in Mr. Castle's place."

"Guess ye're crazy, dad," said Shorty. "De idea of your singing! Yer ain't in it, just a little bit."

"Yer couldn't sing at a nigger funeral, you couldn't," said the Kid.

"And yer ain't agoin' ter sing here, neither," declared Shorty, in a positive tone.

"You've got nothing to say about it," said the Old Man, testily. "I'm manager of this show, and I'll do as I please. I'll see the leader about it and will find out if I can sing or not."

Then off went the Old Man and at once communicated with the leader of the orchestra, through the speaking tube, telling the slinger of the black stick to play "Come into the Garden" for him, as he was going to sing it.

The leader did not care, of course, and as soon as the act then on was over, he whispered around what was coming, and all hands started off on the introduction to the ballad.

A front scene, representing a garden, was shoved on, and in came Josiah in a dress suit with a sheet of music in his hands.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, advancing to the footlights, "our tenor is sick and I will take his place for this occasion only."

The Old Man may have been a good ballad singer once, but those days had long passed away.

The leader waited for him to begin so as not to get ahead of him, the musicians watching for the signal to chime in.

Josiah cleared his throat, threw out his chest, opened his mouth as wide as possible and bawled:

"Come into the garden, Maude!"

Then he forgot the next line, although he knew the one that rhymed with it.

The band went right on, however, making as much noise as possible.

Josiah came in with them on the third line, however.

He could hardly be expected to miss that, seeing that it was:

"Come into the garden, Maude."

He also managed to get out the next line which was:

"I am here by the gate alone."

He did not get any farther than the gate, however.

Just then in popped a female figure most dazzlingly arrayed.

It was Shorty in a red dress with a train made of a green shawl, trailing out three yards behind him, a yellow fright wig, three feet shoes and a high white hat.

"Yer's yo' Maudy, sweetness," he said. "My pap's gone down suller ter get a jug of cider an' I done locked de do' on him an' come out yer in de gyarden fo' to see yo' honey."

The audience howled, Mr. Burwick looked disgusted and Shorty let out a laugh that fairly raised the roof.

Then in came the Kid fixed up as a Buffalo Bill cowboy, with a big hat and boots, and shirt and pistols, and a razor three feet long.

"Dat's my Maudy, yo' old snoozer" he said, flourishing the razor, "an if yo' foolin' wif my gal I cutcher deep, see, nigger."

At that Shorty gave a yell, and off flew his white hat, while up went his yellow hair at least a foot.

The band had stopped playing, for all hands were laughing too much to attend to business.

"Get off the stage," growled the Old Man aside to Shorty.

Then once more he opened his mouth and requested Maude to come into the garden.

"Heah I is, honey," said Shorty, tripping over his train and nearly falling over the Old Man.

"Jest don't yo' hab anyfing to do wif de ole snoozer, I tol' yo', Maudy," said the Kid, flourishing his razor. "If yo' does I cutcher bofe."

"Come into the garden, Maudy. For the black bat night has flown, Come into the garden—"

Shorty and the Kid now joined in singing so loud that the Old Man might have been dumb for all you could hear him.

Shorty sang "In the Gloaming," and the Kid warbled "Annie Laurie," so you can imagine the discord that was raised.

"Let her go, boys; play anything!" yelled Shorty, leaning over and talking to the leader.

Then there arose a horrible racket, every man playing as much out of time and tune as possible, his sole object being to make a noise.

The Old Man clapped his hands to his ears, stamped his foot and yelled:

"Shut up! You'll drive me wild!"

Then those two jokers grabbed him, one on each side, whisked him around and started up the stage with him.

The flats separated, and the three went through and clear way up to the top.

Then the Old Man was suddenly dropped down a trap upon a feather bed, and Shorty and the Kid disappeared.

"Well, I'm going home this time for sure!" growled Mr. Burwick, getting up. "The idea of being treated like this! I won't stand it any more."

As he was stumping away he heard the orchestra playing the very thing he had attempted to sing.

"The idea!" he grunted, and reaching the stage, he looked on at one of the wings and saw Castle singing that old-time ballad in first-class style.

In fact the man wasn't sick at all, the story that he was having been a campaign lie fixed up to fool Josiah.

Shorty had put him up to the snap, however, and when he went on finally he had to sing that old ballad before the crowd would be satisfied.

The Old Man went off to his room in a rage, and said to Ginger Jones in a tone that made that aged darky's hair stand on end:

"Pack up my trunks and go call a carriage or sleigh, or something, at once. I'm going to New York by the next train."

"Yessir, dreckly, sir," muttered Ginger, wondering what had come over his master all of a sudden.

"Don't give me any back talk, you black rascal," sputtered Josiah, beginning to hustle off his clothes, throwing them this way and that, regardless of consequences.

He took Ginger in the mug with his coat, sent his vest flying up to the top of the bureau, and threw his trousers to the other end of the room, all in three shakes.

Then he began to wash up, knocking down the washstand and spilling water all over the floor.

"Hol' up, sah," suggested Ginger. "Maybe ef yo' wasn't in sech a hurry yo' could get 'long faster, sah."

"Mind your own business, your black idiot," answered the Old Man, chucking a shoe brush at Ginger's head. "You go to work and pack up, and don't have so much to say."

That was enough for Mr. Jones, and he obeyed orders.

He chuck'd everything into the trunks in a jiffy, slammed down the lids, locked them, and then went off to get a cab or something to take them to the station.

The Old Man began to work more systematically, and consequently accomplished twice as much as before.

Having washed up he began to look around for his street clothes.

He found his overcoat and hat, but nothing was to be seen of his trousers or coat.

One shoe was found in a corner, after a search, but not the missing trousers.

Ginger had put them in the trunk, and the keys were in his pocket.

"Confound that nigger, what has he done with my pants and coat?" sputtered Josiah, bustling about. "I can't go out in this style."

Then he thought of the trunks, and grabbed hold of the lid of one of them to see if he could find his breeches.

He could not get into it, of course.

Moreover, he was rapidly catching cold, standing there in his drawers and vest, and he began to sneeze.

Then he put on his overcoat and one shoe, and rang the bell for somebody.

One of the stage hands came and asked what he desired.

"Where is that stupid darky of mine?" demanded Josiah.

"Gone out, sir. Said he was going to order a carriage."

"Well, send somebody after him. I'll freeze to death here."

"You can go into the boiler-room if you like, sir, but we ain't allowed to leave the theater."

Josiah did not go into the boiler-room, but curled up on a sofa in his own room instead, covering his legs and feet with his big coat.

Ginger Jones did not show up until the show was over, and then he announced that he couldn't get a Leigh, sledge, cab, omnibus, carriage, or even wheelbarrow, everything in town being engaged.

The Old Man sputtered a bit and then demanded his keys, that he might get something to wear home at all events.

that sort of business, there was no end of rugs and blankets and foot warmers in the sleigh, and there seemed to be no reason why they shouldn't all have a first class time.

"I'll drive, going out, pop, and you and der Kid kin sit on der back seat and keep each other company," said Shorty as they prepared to enter the sleigh.

No one objected to this arrangement and in a few moments away they drove, gliding over the glittering snow like a duck over a mill pond.

The road was good, the day was just cold enough for comfort, the horses were dandies,

Off they went, Shorty driving, and the Kid cracking the whip and singing out to the nags to get a move on themselves.

It was somewhat colder than in the morning, the snow was hard and crisp, and made a singing sound as the runners glided over it, while the wind whistled and shouted and made things just hum and no error.

They were half way home, and were in a part of the road where there wasn't a house in sight, the wind sweeping across the plains with a whizz and a whiff of the Polar regions in it, when the Old Man suddenly espied something on the other side of a stone wall.

"Hold up a second, George!" he shouted.



"Oh, Lord," he gasped, as he put forth all his strength and began to whoop her up. He had never run so fast before, and probably won't want to do so again. His short legs fairly flew over the ground and he puffed like a steam engine. The bear ran too, and now that he was on all fours, made very good time.

Nothing more was said about going to New York that night, and Ginger chuckled at the success of his plan of staying out till the Old Man had got over his mad.

"Say, pop," said Shorty to the Old Man a day or so after this, the little runt having revenge in mind, "let's me and you and der Kid go sleighin' to-morrer. It's bully just now."

"Why, yes, that ought to be nice," said Josiah. "I haven't had a real good sleigh ride in some time."

"Well den, come along. We'll go early, take a good long drive, get our grub somewhere on der road, and den get back to town in plenty time for der show."

"Dat's fust rate," piped up the Kid. "We'll have a bully time, just us and nobody else."

Josiah thought the plan a good one, and was so full of the idea that he actually forgot to stipulate that there should be no larks during the ride.

Right after breakfast the next morning, a fine, big, two-seated cutter, drawn by a pair of spanking bays, was driven up to the hotel, and presently the three little runts came out.

They were all well wrapped in furs and all

and they all went skimming along, feeling tiptop.

They drove about twenty miles and then, having good appetites, put up at a hotel on the road and ordered a first-class dinner.

They paid first-class attention to it when it came, I can assure you, and when they had finished, there wasn't enough left to feed a canary on.

Finally, after having had a cigar and something to settle their dinners, and getting well toasted at the fire besides, Shorty suggested that they had better return.

"You and me sit in front this time, Kiddy," proposed George, "and let der gov'nor have der back seat to hisself."

"He kin fill it, he can," laughed the Kid. "He ate an awful dinner, he did, and he's twice der size he was comin' out."

"Yes, and if yer sit next to him he'll squeeze yer as flat as a sheet o' paper. Give der Ole Man plenty o' room, Cholly, me boy."

The Old Man took the back seat, and was well bundled up to keep out the cold, finding riding alone preferable to having some one on the seat with him.

"There is a very rare plant right over there, and I want to get some of the berries and a cutting to put with my botanical collection."

The Old Man was as much of a crank as ever where collecting was concerned, and the sight of the dark-green leaves and bright red berries on the bush behind the wall was quite enough to stir up his ardor as a specialist in the botany line.

"What do yer soy, pop?" asked Shorty, pulling up.

"Stop a minute and let me get some slips from that bush. It's a very rare specimen of the *oxalis hydroclosis vulgaris*, and I want some of it. I did not know it grew in this part of the country."

"All right, pop—hurry up," said Shorty, giving the Kid a knowing and very suggestive wink, "and don't get stuck in der drifts."

Josiah turned down the rugs and blankets, hopped out, and skipped over the wall in a jiffy.

He was just about climbing over it when a sudden sound caught his ear, and he looked quickly around.

There was that sleigh with Shorty and the Kid in it driving away like the very dickens.

"Whoa! Hold up!" yelled the Old Man, trying to get off that wall in a hurry.

He did so, for a fact, and the famous fall of the celebrated Humpty Dumpty was not in it when put alongside the tumble Josiah took.

Down he went off that wall in a brace of shakes, rolling clean into the middle of the road.

Then up he jumped and began bowling along the snowy road as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

"Hold on—don't go away and leave me!" he yelled at the top of his lungs.

Neither Shorty nor that wicked Kid paid any more heed to his cries than they would if they had been deaf, dumb and blind.

## CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER the cutter containing Shorty and the Kid ran the Old Man as fast as he could travel, yelling at the top of his voice for them to stop.

They did not do it, all the same, nor did they even look around.

Of course he could not keep up a pace like that for any length of time, and, barring accidents, he must soon stop.

He came to a halt more speedily than he expected.

A lump of snow turned under his foot, and down he went in regular spread eagle style.

When he arose the sleigh had disappeared around a bend in the road.

Up he got, brushed the snow off him, uttering at the same time a word strong enough to have melted it, and began to trudge on in the direction of the city.

He had gone not more than a quarter of a mile when something came out of a little patch of woods near the road and rapidly approached.

At first he took it to be a man and hailed it.

"Hi, do you live around here, and can you take me to Omaha?"

The man made no answer, but continued to advance at a good trot.

Josiah thought him to be a man of furs, and he considered him very sensible in dressing thusly.

As he was about to address him again, however, he made a discovery which filled him with horror, dismay, terror, fear and everything else scaring.

His man in a fur coat was a big black bear.

The way he faced around and took to his heels upon making this discovery was something extraordinary.

"Great guns! it's a bear!" he gasped and away he hoofed it, at full speed.

"That's what I get for coming out into these wild, unsettled places," he sighed, as he made his fat legs go like piston rods.

Visions of being made a meal of by the wild beast in the rear, floated across his mental horizon and gave wings to his feet.

The bear could run as well as he could, however, and if anything, go him one better.

He looked over his shoulder presently, at the risk of falling, and saw that bruin was gaining on him fast.

"Oh, Lord," he gasped, as he put forth all his strength and began to whoop her up.

He had never run so fast before, and probably won't want to do so again.

His short legs fairly flew over the ground and he puffed like a steam engine.

The bear ran too, and now that he was on all fours, made very good time.

Mr. Burwick did not care to look back a second time for he had seen more than enough to suffice him at the first look.

He was nearly tuckered out, but he hoped that he might last a little while longer, for he could now see a house not so very far away and here he hoped to find shelter.

On he ran, with all his might, but the bear was gaining on him every minute, and would soon overhaul him.

At last, utterly tired out, and unable to run an inch farther, the poor Old Man flopped right down in the snow and began to make preparations for his last appearance on this earthly stage.

"Oh dear, oh dear! Now I lay me down to sleep; ana, mana, mona Mike, there is a happy land, far, far away. No, no; that isn't it," he gasped. "Why can't I remember my prayers. Oh dear, oh dear, I'm a poor dead old man, and there ain't a soul to help me."

Just then he felt a hot breath on his cheek, and the touch of a moist, warm tongue on his neck.

He gave one yell, and then flunked dead away

in a faint, believing that his terrestrial curtain had at last been rung down.

Now it so happened that that bear was not the fierce wild monster of the woods that Josiah believed him to be.

He was simply a performing animal owned by a traveling French Canadian, who exhibited him for filthy lucre, and thereby made a tidy living for himself and Bruin.

He had escaped from a stable where he had been kept, however, and the collar, with a broken chain attached to it, around his neck, proved conclusively that he was not the wild man-eater he was thought to be.

On the contrary, he was a sociable sort of brute, and not having seen a man for three days welcomed Josiah's approach with delirious joy.

That same delirious joy of his came near to bring too much for Josiah Burwick, however, for if he had had to run another ten yards he would probably have busted something.

Now, however, he had come off with the man he had been so glad to see, and he began to show his delight by kissing, sniffing and rooting at the poor old man as he lay on the snow.

Just before Josiah came around again, two men came hurrying up, and one of them cried:

"Houp-la, Baptiste, vere you go zis long time? Ha! Sit up, make ze bow. Kees ze hand to ze ladies."

"Wall, I reckon that's the feller yer done been lookin' fur after all, ain't it?" muttered the other.

"Oui-oui! zat is my Baptiste. I know him, he know me. Ho-la, Baptiste, dance for ze gentleman."

The bear immediately arose on his hind feet and began to move around in what might, by a great stretch of the imagination, be called a dance, but which seemed more like the gyrations of a tipsy man trying to walk on both sides of the street at once, at two in the morning.

Just then, Mr. Burwick recovered, saw two men, and jumped to his feet with a glad cry.

Next he saw the bear, gave a yell and started to run, but the Canuck said, reassuringly:

"Do not have ze fear, sare. Baptiste vill not hort you. He ees ze good fel, he ees glad to see ze good gentleman. Shake ze han', Baptiste."

The Canuck and bruin shook hands and then executed a waltz, much to the amusement of the Nebraskan.

"That thar b'ar won't hurt ye none," the latter said to Josiah. "This here Frenchy done missed him, and come ter my house looking fur him, and I s'pect the b'ar be as glad ter see him as he be ter see the b'ar. Mighty peart animile, ben't he?"

"Yes—yes, very clever," grunted Josiah, taking good care not to let Bruin approach too close, however.

"Ha, Baptiste is fol to run away, to hide in ze wood wiz nossing to eat but ze snowball and ze berry, but Baptiste soll go to his house wiz me, and we soll please ze ladies and ze gentleman.ould m'seur be please to see ze bear do hees treeks? M'sieur can give vatevair he like."

"No, I've seen all I want to," growled Josiah, "but there's a dollar for you, and now I want to get back to the city as soon as I can."

"Better come up to the house and stop awhile, stranger," said the native. "I got some right good corn bread, and we folks killed a hawg last night, and yer won't starve, yer won't."

"Thank you very much," muttered Josiah, moving away, the bear having began to make advances to him, "but I must get back to the city. My own horse ran away awhile ago, and I am afraid my friends will worry. Have you a sleigh, and can you take me to Omaha at once?"

"Wall, yas, I got a sorter sleigh and a hoss critter, but the boys 'cut up so when I go away from hum, and I'm so dadburned busy just now, 'at I—"

"I'll pay you whatever you like," interposed Josiah, "for I must get back to the city at once. I'll give you twenty dollars."

The farmer would have been satisfied with five cases, but of course he wasn't refusing twenty.

"Wall, I'll do it," he said reluctantly, not wishing to appear too anxious, "though I could make more'n that stayin' to hum; but seein' as it's to oblige a clever ole gent like you, I don't mind puttin' m'self out once in a way."

Then Josiah went with him to the house while he hitched up.

There wasn't any nonsensical style about that farmer's rig, you'd better believe.

An old box sled on runners, a rickety old nag through whose ribs the wintry winds seemed to be playing a tune, a harness made up of all

the old odds and ends you could think of, a lot of straw, a disreputable horse blanket, and the raggedest looking buffalo robe you ever saw made up the outfit.

Josiah was not particular, however, for he was in a hurry, and would have taken even a less pretentious vehicle than the one that appeared, rather than not go at once.

After being warmed at the farm-house fire, and taking a big drink of corn whiskey, which nearly strangled him, the Old Man took his place on the only seat the sled afforded, beside the driver, and away they started.

When they reached the hotel there was a grand laugh, and the Old Man got out very mad, paid over his twenty dollars, and went in.

The first fellows he met were Shorty and the Kid.

"Hallo, pop; where yer been?" asked Shorty.

"You know well enough where I've been," snapped Josiah. "What did you go off and leave me by the road in that way for?"

"When did yer get out, grandpop?" asked Charlie.

"Blowed if we ever missed yer till we drove up here," added Shorty.

"You didn't miss me!" gasped Mr. Burwick.

"Nixey."

"You didn't know where I got out of the cutter?"

"Course not."

"Did yer fall out, pop?"

"Why didn't yer holler?"

"Never was so beat out when we got here and didn't find yer."

"We was just goin' ter send a search party out for yer, pop."

"How did it happen, grandpop?"

Josiah stared at those two little runts in astonishment.

They were both as sober as judges.

"Do you mean to say you thought I was in the sleigh all the way home?"

"Cert!" both promptly answered.

"And you don't remember stopping to let me out to pick some berries from a strange plant?"

No, they did not remember anything of the sort.

Josiah could not jog their memories on that point either.

"Tell yer, we never knowed but what yer was in der sleigh all der way."

"Course we didn't. It broke us all up when we found yer wasn't in it."

"Where did yer fall out, pop? Was it very far back?"

"Hurt you much, Ole Man? Did yer holler?"

"I didn't fall out!" jawed Josiah. "You let me out and then went off without me."

"Oh—oh, pop, how can you do it? Oh—oh, and you a Sunday-school super!"

"Oh, I wouldn't tell such stories for nothin'! Ain't you scared?"

"De idea of us goin' away and leavin' you to walk homel! Oh, pop!"

"We never couldn't do it, nohow. We wouldn't be so mean, would we, dad?"

"No, Chawles, we couldn't do it. Yer grandpop took too much cider with his dinner."

There was clearly no satisfaction to be gotten out of either Shorty or the Kid, and the Old Man soon gave it up.

Whatever Shorty said the Kid agreed to and vice versa, and there you were.

"Well," muttered Josiah, as he went off to get ready for dinner, "this settles it if it was never settled before. I shall leave for home tonight!"

"Can't get away, pop, der roads are all block'd up with snow forty foot deep."

It was not so bad as that, but Josiah did not go back all the same.

At the close of the Omaha engagement Shanks took his entire party by easy stages straight through to Denver, stopping two or three nights at Leavenworth, Topeka and Dodge City in Kansas, and then on by way of Pueblo and Colorado Springs to Denver, when they opened for a fortnight at the beautiful Tabor Opera House to a smashing big audience.

They had been seeing the country as well as playing on the way from Omaha, and though Shanks did not generally care to play short engagements, he did not mind doing it now, for he hated to make such long jumps as would otherwise have been necessary.

It was at Denver that the Old Man once more resolved to get square on Shorty.

His little snap on this occasion was a variation of the old-fashioned bent pin racket.

He first stole into Shorty's dressing-room and fastened a pin in the seat of the little

joker's dress trousers where it would do the most good.

Then he did the same to a pair of loud-checked pants that Shorty wore in one of his comical acts.

He likewise treated a pair of clown breeches, very baggy and voluminous, in the same manner, and then put a pin in the chair occupied by George in the first part.

When George was dressing for the opening, he suddenly received a stab in the rear.

"Oh, gee! What's dat?" he muttered, giving a jump.

An investigation showed the cause of his agitation, and it was promptly removed.

"Never did, dad," said the Kid, producing the stave.

"Well, it's very queer," muttered Shorty. "Seems to be raining pins to-night."

On taking off the clown suit, the pin was found in the seat of the big trousers.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," said Shorty. "I was sure I'd chuck that thing away."

Later on he dressed for his banjo act with the Kid, but did not think to look for pins.

He found one when he sat down, and it found him and no mistake.

"Holy smoke!" he ejaculated, jumping up and giving the Kid a belt in the ear which upset him.

"Honest Injun, I don't know nothin' about it, dad," said Charlie.

After the banjo act, George made another investigation, and found a big pin fastened in the bosom of his banjo act breeches.

"Well, I'll be blowed," he muttered. "That's three times I've chucked that thing away. Wonder how many more times I'm going to get stuck with it. You're too funny, Kiddy."

"Hope I may never see der back of my neck if I did it, pop," protested the Kid.

"Is dat straight, young feller?"

"Straight as a house, pop."

"Well, it's very funny how I get caught so



In a brace of shakes they found themselves on the sidewalk alongside the trunks. "This is an outrage," stormed the Old Man, shaking his fist at the trunks. "I'll have you all arrested. I won't be treated in this shameful manner. I'll sue the house for damages."

When the curtain arose, George was seen standing in front of his chair, like all the rest of the company.

When the Old Man requested the gang to be seated, George sat down like the rest of them, but, unlike the rest he gave a sudden howl and jumped up again.

"Jiminy! I thought I got rid of dat pin once," he muttered, as he seized the obnoxious article and threw it away.

There was no more trouble until he skipped out at the end of the first part to get into his clown rig, a comic circus act concluding the drawing room part of the show.

Once more that deadly pin got in its fine work but not immediately.

The breeches were big enough to make it harmless until the Kid whacked Shorty with a barrel stave as he went to jump through a hoop.

Then that pin made itself felt, and Shorty thought he was stabbed to the heart, it worked so well.

When they went off he accused Charlie of having had a tack in the end of the barrel stave.

"What yer do dat fur, dad?" asked Charlie.

"You know what," muttered Shorty, brushing off the chair seat with his hand.

Then he sat down again, but the pin got there ahead of him and made things lively.

"Wow, pins!" he grunted, jumping up again and aiming a crack at the Kid.

"What's der matter?" asked Charlie who had dodged.

"You're too fresh with dem pins, young feller," growled George, sitting on one side of himself so as not to get stuck again.

"Don't know nothin' about them, pop," protested the Kid. "Let her go!"

Shorty was not sure about it, but he couldn't do anything just then, as he and Charlie were on for their banjo act.

The audience thought that all this funny business was a part of the act, and declared that those two runts were getting more comical every day.

Shorty got stuck again in shifting his position, and he growled savagely at the Kid and muttered:

"Wait till I get you home, young feller. You'll get a warmin' for this."

many times on der same ting and you're the only feller what I told about it."

"Oh, I take me beans," cried Charlie, with a sudden outburst of mirth. "I've got it this time, Gawge."

"Got what?"

"Got onter der snap. Grandpop's been workin' it on yer. Dat's just der kind of rackets he gets up."

"The old snoozer!" muttered Shorty. "I'll soak him for this, you bet."

It would have been all right, as it was, if Josiah had let well enough alone, but he didn't.

He wanted to make his joke still more pointed and he sneaked into Shorty's room when the latter was doing in his part in the afterpiece and proceeded to fix up George's street trousers in the same way he had fixed the others.

As it happened, however, he miscalculated the length of the farce and thought it had just begun when it was nearly over.

He was so intent on his little joke that Shorty came to the door and he didn't know anything about it.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" thought George, as he sneaked away noiselessly.

"Well, I'll fix you this time, just see if I don't."

Then he got a bladder tied to the end of a stick and waited for the Old Man to come out.

## CHAPTER XXII.

WHACK!

Shorty stood outside the door of his dressing room, and when the Old Man came out, he got a crack on the head with a blown-up bladder.

That is, Shorty thought it was the Old Man, but it wasn't, just the same.

It was the Kid.

"Hold on, pop, don't be so fresh," he muttered, "it's me."

"Well, if dat ain't funny," said Shorty. "Where's pop?"

"In dere. I twiggled him, and come out ter tell yer about it, so's we could roast him."

In fact, Charlie had entered the room in the brief interval that Shorty was away from it, getting the bladder and stick.

That's how he happened to get the crack meant for the Old Man.

"Well, I reckon he won't come out now," said Shorty "cause he knows something's up. Come on, let's go."

This was said as a blind, so that Josiah would think they had gone, come out and get a crack on the noddle.

The Old Man was too fly for those funny fellows just then, however.

He did not come out, and they waited in vain, and finally went off, and then he came out.

"I got even with 'em once anyhow," he remarked the next day, on thinking the thing over, "but I'll get more so, just see if I don't."

"Pop soaked us that time," said Shorty to the Kid.

"No, dad, you soaked me," returned Charlie. "Didn't know you had so much muscle."

"Well, I ain't a clam if I are got mussel."

"Where did you crab that bad joke, pop?"

"Get out, you shrimp—that's good."

"Yes—good for nothing," and there were no more attempts at fishy puns.

The Denver engagement was up in a few days, and then the company went to Salt Lake City and Ogden in Utah, thence to Carson City in Nevada, and then straight on to San Francisco.

Here Shorty roasted the Old Man once more, that fussy old party having begun to get cantankerous again.

"Soy, pop," he said one evening, "dere's a delegation of old Californians in der house to-night, reg'lar ole forty-niners, and you'll want to show off big."

"What do you mean, George?" asked the Old Man. "There won't be any of my old acquaintances here. They are all dead."

"No, dey ain't, and you want to do yerself proud. I'll put on der farce of der Hotel Keeper's Revenge, and you can have a big part in it."

"No, sir, no farces for me," the Old Man responded heatedly. "I know what you are up to."

"No, no, fen everything, pop. I ain't going to play no roots on you—honest I ain't."

"But I don't know the part and I haven't time to study it."

"Don't need no studyin', pop. All yer gotter do is to wink at me and hold up yer hand. That means that I'm to bounce everybody that comes in when you do that."

"Yes, but I won't know when to do it."

"Oh, yes, you will. Der Kid'll be behind and tell yer."

"Well, George, if you think that my friends will be pleased to see me on the stage, I'll do it, but I'm afraid they'd rather see me somewhere else."

"No, they won't, they like the show and you'll get lots of applause and that'll make the show go fust rate, pop."

The Old Man would rather not have taken part in the piece but he could not resist the temptation of having his friends pleased, and so he consented.

As a matter of fact there wasn't one of his old pals in the house that night.

Those that were still living were either in the poorhouse or in jail and not likely to go to the show, but he took Shorty's word for it and got fooled.

The piece might have been called "Hamlet," "The Robbers," or "Blood on the Moon," as well as "The Hotel Keeper's Revenge," for there was no hotel keeper in it and the scene was laid in a wood.

The Old Man went on when the Kid told him to, wearing a long-tailed coat and a very high white hat.

Unknown to Josiah there was a placard on his back which said :

"I AM NO GOOD AND SO ARE YOU."

"Turn around," whispered Charlie, when Josiah went on.

He did so and there was a howl.

"Hold up your hand," was the next order as Shorty came on.

Josiah held up his hand and a noose was dropped from above.

"The other hand," whispered the Kid, "and turn around."

Up went the Old Man's hand and then he found himself suddenly dancing in the air.

Both hands were caught in nooses and he was yanked up in the air most unceremoniously.

"Hi—hi—hello, let me go!" howled Josiah.

"Patent jumping jack," said Shorty. "Doesn't he look putty?"

"Hold up yer hand," whispered the Kid from behind the scenes.

The idea of telling him to do that with both hands in the air.

"Let me down!" he yelled, kicking like a good fellow.

"He's better dan you thought he was, ain't he?" laughed Shorty. "He's too modest, he is."

"Let me down!" yelled Josiah.

Then in came the Kid in song-and-dance rig and a club in his hand.

"Why don't yer hold up yer hand when I tell yer to?" he demanded. "Why can't yer 'tend to yer cues when I give 'em to yer?"

"Let me down, I say," roared the Old Man again kicking out.

One of his shoes flew off and took Shorty in the neck, making him jump.

"Take yer base!" laughed the Kid. "I didn't know yer was such a good kicker, grandpop."

"Let me go, I say," howled Josiah, and off flew the other shoe, sailing out over the heads of the audience.

"Great flying leap for life," chuckled Shorty.

"Hold up your hands," cried the Kid.

"This is der landlord's revenge, ha-ha!"

"Come in fellers, and see der flying machine working."

Then all the company came on and began to do a grand walk around.

The Old Man was still yelling, but all of a sudden the ropes gave way or were lowered, and down he came kerflop on the stage.

"Der fall of Rome, fetch in der red fire, tableau and wind up," sang out Shorty.

No one knew what the farce was about, but that did not make any difference.

The Old Man jumped up and tried to get away but all hands chased him around the stage, and in the end he fell down a trap in the middle of the stage.

"This is my revenge, I am Monte Cristo and Hamlet's ghost," cried Shorty, seizing a four foot dagger from the wings and whacking Charlie with it, and then all hands had a grand jig to red fire and loud music, and down went the curtain.

That last racket made the Old Man mad, and he began to talk about going home without giving any notice.

He told it to Shorty, to the Kid, to the boys, to the women and to Shanks until they were sick.

Every day he said the same thing, and they all began to wish that he would go, and have an end to it.

Finally Shorty thought of a good snap, and secured the co-operation of the ladies.

The San Francisco engagement had been for no definite period, but only for as long or short a time as suited all hands.

Shorty secured a good attraction to fill out his time, and closed the engagement in the middle of the week without saying a word about it to Mr. Burwick.

The next morning Josiah had the rheumatism or cramps, or something else, and was as cross as a bear.

"I'm sick of this business," he sputtered before Shorty, Shanks and the Kid. "I'm sick of it, and I'm going home."

"You've been sayin' that fur der last six months, pop," retorted Shorty. "Why der mischief don't yer go, if yer wanter?"

The Old Man growled out some answer and went away.

He hired a carriage and went off driving, intending to be gone most of the afternoon, which was just what Shorty wanted.

In fact, he saw the driver and made it worth his while not to bring the Old Man back until just before dinner.

Then he went to the proprietor of the hotel, paid all the bills except Josiah's, and gave the boss one or two instructions.

"That's all right, George," said the other with a laugh.

"And you won't give him any money?"

"Not a cent."

"Not till you hear from me?"

"No, not till then."

"Den dat's all right, and we'll see how pop likes it."

Then the entire party skipped out, the Shortys, the whole minstrel troupe and Shanks, leaving Josiah and Ginger behind.

That fancy coon thinking he had a good chance to enjoy himself, in his master's absence, had taken himself off on a tour of the town and never showed up till just before dinner.

Shanks would not have gone away without Mr. Burwick if he had known about the snap, but he did not.

Shorty took care that he knew nothing about it till they were well on their journey.

The manager was kept busy getting the trunks aboard, picking out seats and all that till the very last moment.

Then, seeing George, Charlie, the women and the boys all in a car by themselves and having a good time, he never missed the Old Man but presumed that he was taking a nap or quietly reading somewhere by himself and never thought of hunting him up.

Well, the whole tribe had skipped and Josiah did not know a word about it until he came back from his drive.

He came in just as Ginger Jones did, and saw his three big trunks standing in the rotunda.

"Who brought those trunks down?" he asked.

"Don' know nuffin' 'bout it, sah" said Ginger promptly.

"Has George decided to go home after all?"

"Really, I couldn't say, sah. He neber consults me 'bout nuffin' nowadays, sah."

"Where is George, anyhow?"

"Don' know, sah."

"Why don't you know, sir?" snapped the old man. "Don't you know anything?"

"No sah," replied the coon, not caring to get into a row with that cross old gentleman.

"Well, go and get the key of my room and I'll go and dress for dinner."

Ginger went to the desk, but presently came back and said :

"De ge'man says we haben't any room at dis hotel."

"What!" gasped the old man.

"He says we don' lib yer no mo' sah."

"I'll see about that!" sputtered Josiah, as he tramped up to the desk.

"I want the key of my room."

"You have no room in this house, Mr. Burwick."

"What's the reason I haven't?"

"Because it's been given up."

"Who gave it up?"

"Mr. George Burwick."

"Where is he?"

"Gone."

"Gone where?"

"To New York."

"When did he go?"

"This afternoon."

The Old Man was staggered.

"Where's Charles then?"

"Gone."

"Then where's my wife?"

"Gone."

"And the boys?"

"Gone!"

"All gone, and I did not know it?"

"They've gone fast enough, and it isn't my fault if you did not know it."

The Old Man turned savagely upon Ginger, and demanded :

"Where were you, confound your black skin, that you did not know about this?"

"Ah—ah—ah—just took a lilly bit ob—ob—ob a walk, sah—dat's all," gasped Ginger.

"H'm! Of course you did, and just when you ought to have been in the house, you black scamp."

"I did n' spose nuffin' was gwine ter happen, sah," stammered Ginger. "I'se been out fo' a little walk befo', sah, an' nuffin' happen."

"You had no business to go away, you stupid donkey. If you had been here this would not have happened. Well, I suppose I've got to go, too, now. Order me a carriage after dinner."

"You'll pay your bill, I suppose?" asked the clerk.

"Ain't my bill paid?"

"No, sir."

"Why didn't George pay it?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, Mr. Burwick. I'm not good at answering riddles."

"Well, where's Shanks?"

"Gone!"

That last announcement knocked the Old Man flat.

"Gone!" he echoed.

"Yes, gone."

"How much is my bill?" asked Josiah, feeling in his pockets.

laughed the clerk. "Money is the only sort of talk that I understand."

"But I'll pay you in the end, I tell you."

"You must pay me now."

"I can't, I tell you."

"Then out you go."

Ting!

That was the bell on the fellow's desk.

Up rushed a porter.

"Put those trunks on the sidewalk."

Up came three more porters, and the trunks were hustled out in a jiffy.

"Confound it all, you'll get your money, I tell you," sputtered Josiah.

The crowd was just enjoying the fun, however, and the more the Old Man stormed, the more they liked it.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

THINGS were getting a little too lively outside the hotel to suit the proprietor thereof.

He was in the joke with Shorty to soak the Old Man, but he had not expected Josiah to make quite so much of a disturbance.

It would never do, of course, to have the Old Man go on like that and draw a mob before the house.

Consequently two of the porters were sent out to bring in the Old Man and Ginger.



They pulled and hauled and mauled and pinched and hustled and yelled at him, till he did not know if it were he or somebody else. "Stop, stop! Let me go, for goodness' sake!" he finally sputtered.

"Are you all crazy? You act like a parcel of idiots!"

"One hundred and eleven dollars for you and Mr. Jones."

"Why, didn't George pay it?" asked Josiah, with his wallet in his hand.

"You asked me that before and I said I did not know."

"Twelve dollars and forty cents!" gasped Josiah, looking at his pocket-book.

"No, no; one hundred and eleven dollars!"

"And then there's the railroad tickets; that'll be about three hundred dollars more."

"Very near it," warbled the clerk.

"Well, well, that's all right," said Josiah. "You know me, of course. Just let me have three or four hundred dollars. It'll be all right."

"Oh, no, it won't," said the clerk. "It's pay up or get out in this hotel."

"But you know very well that I've got money enough to pay you."

"Then why don't you do it?"

"Well, just now I'm short, of course. Never do carry much money about me, but that's all right. My name is good for any amount, I tell you."

"You can't play any such gag as that on me,"

"Yas, sah, yo'll get yo' money, ob co'se yo' will," put in Ginger.

Then he and Josiah were both put out.

In a brace of shakes they found themselves on the sidewalk alongside the trunks.

"This is an outrage," stormed the Old Man, shaking his fist at the trunks. "I'll have you all arrested. I won't be treated in this shameful manner. I'll sue the house for damages."

"Yas'r, we'll sue de ho'se for damages, dat wha' we do," said Mr. Jones, excitedly.

Of course a crowd gathered when the Old Man began to go on in this style.

Why wouldn't it?

And the more excited the Old Man got, the bigger grew the crowd.

"The idea of turning a respectable man out in the street, when he could buy up this old hotel and dozen more like it. It's outrageous, I say."

"Yas'r, it am outrageous, dat's wha' it am."

"Hold your tongue, you black idiot!" roared Josiah, in a tone that made Ginger hop. "It's all your fault, you lazy, good-for-nothing black scoundrel. If you had attended to business and not gone away, this would not have happened."

Ginger was sorry he had said anything.

They were brought in in a hurry, and the crowd dispersed.

"What's the matter, Mr. Burwick?" asked the landlord.

"My trunks were put out on the sidewalk by your clerk. It's an outrage."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Burwick, he did not know you. He simply acts under orders."

"The idea of not knowing me! Why, I can get money enough easily to more than pay our bills here."

"Of course you can."

"All I want is to have you advance me the money for our railroad tickets, and when I get to New York I'll send you the amount of your bill."

"Excuse me, Mr. Burwick, but I don't do business that way," said the landlord. "Stay here as long as you like—a month, six months, a year if you like, but you can't go without settling up. That is our invariable rule."

"Marse Gawge sen' yo' the money ef yo' ax him," suggested Ginger. "Juss yo' telumgraff to um an' de money come de nex' day. Dey've got dese tings down bery fine dese days."

"To be sure I could do that," muttered

Josiah. "Shanks would be better than George, though. I'll telegraph him."

"That will be all right, of course," said the landlord.

"Where had I better send?" asked Josiah.

"Oh, anywhere on the road. There's no hurry. The morning will do. You'll go into dinner, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And have your old room, too, I presume?"

"Yes, that will do very well."

The trunks were brought in and taken up, and Josiah was himself again.

He was a bit lonesome after dinner, and he went to one of the theaters, being given a box, as he was well known.

The next morning he telegraphed to Shorty at Ogden to send him some money to get out of town.

He waited all day without hearing from George, and that night took in another show to pass the time.

The next morning he got a dispatch from the operator at Ogden reading as follows:

"Shorty party not on this route. Telegraph to Denver."

"H'm! that's a pretty idea!" muttered the Old Man. "Here I've lost two days. I'll catch them at Denver, though."

This was no more satisfactory than the other.

"No such people found. Must have gone on."

"H'm! What'll I do now?" growled the Old Man. "I can't go telegraphing all over the country."

"Ain' yo' got no ole fren's in Califo'ny what'll len' yo' de money, sah?" suggested Ginger.

"H'm, no, I'm afraid not. I didn't live in San Francisco, you know, and my old friends are all dead or too poor to lend me any money, and besides I don't know where to find them."

"Maybe de boss ob de theayter kin len' yo' some."

"Oh, it'll be all right when I get word to George," said the Old Man, "but it's rather lonesome waiting here."

"You might telegraph to Kansas City," suggested the hotel clerk. "That's ahead and your wire will get there before Shorty does."

The Old Man adopted the suggestion and wired to Kansas City.

The despatch was brought through the very train on which Shorty was traveling and demand was made for Mr. George Burwick by the messenger.

The women did not hear it and nobody else said a word, and the boy went into another car.

Josiah waited and waited until he knew that the train must have long since passed Kansas City and then he wired to know if the message had been delivered.

"No such person found," was the answer sent back.

"Confound it all, what's the matter with the telegraph service of this country, anyhow?" growled Josiah.

"Try Chicago next," suggested the clerk.

"But I haven't money enough," muttered the Old Man.

"Send it C. O. D. then. That'll be all right."

Mr. Burwick wired to Chicago, and, after waiting two days, the answer came:

"Party not on this line. Collect \$5.40. Try Union Pacific."

"Collect five-forty, hey?" said Josiah, with a grunt. "Why, that's more money than I've got."

By scraping together his odd quarters and nickels, however, the Old Man found that he had money enough, but it left him nearly strapped.

This sort of thing was getting monotonous, and he wondered where it was going to end.

"I must have been a terrible nuisance," he muttered, in his repentant state, "or they wouldn't have gone off and left me like this. I'll do better next time."

Seven days had passed, and the Old Man was still in San Francisco.

"Wish I had written at the start," he mused. "The letter would be in New York now, and George would have it."

"Why don' yo' try sendin' wo'd to de ho'se by telumgraph?" asked Ginger.

"I haven't any money," sighed Josiah.

"Can't yo' tell um ter collect on de oder end? Marse Gawge kin pay fo'."

"Well, I'll try anyhow," said the Old Man sadly.

He sent off a night message at half rates to George in New York and anxiously awaited an answer.

It came the next day, and was sent to the landlord.

"I've got a message for you, Shorty," said the boss, when Josiah came down to breakfast.

"What does he say?" cried Josiah eagerly.

"Read it for yourself," said the landlord, handing over the dispatch.

"To Proprietor Palace Hotel,

"San Francisc'o.

"Let the old sucker have all the boodle he wants.

"SHORTY."

Maybe the Old Man felt happy when he read that?

"H'm! Well, he needn't have put it that way?" growled the mad old gent. "I've a good mind not to take any money from him. I'll telegraph to my bankers instead."

"Yo' betta take it, sah, when yo' can get it," said that wise coon, Ginger Jones. "Marse Gawge mought change him min', an' de banker man mought be dead or out ob town. Yo' can't tell nuffin' bout it—way at de oder end ob de country like dis."

Mr. Burwick concluded to take Ginger's advice, and he drew a liberal amount of money from the proprietor of the hotel, more than enough to cover all expenses.

Then he went to settle up his bill, but found that it had been settled all except the last week.

"The book-keeper forgot to credit the amount," said the clerk, "but your bill was paid at the time the others were. All you owe now is forty six dollars and thirty nine cents."

"H'm!" grunted the Old Man, but it expressed volumes.

Having settled up, the Old Man took the first through train for New York, taking Ginger along.

It was no fun traveling all by his lones, however, even if he did have that coon along to wait on him.

Poor Josiah was tired of it before two days were over.

"I'm sorry I said so much about going home," he muttered. "I don't like it just a little."

Ginger had a good enough time of it, however, for he made friends with the colored porters and waiters and had lots of fun besides plenty of good things to eat.

Railway journeys have to come to an end as well as everything else, and at last the Old Man and Ginger arrived in New York City, glad enough to get home.

The Old Man took a cab, had his trunks piled on, put Ginger on the box with the driver, and drove home.

He arrived at the house shortly before dinner time, and when the Irish footman let him in, proceeded at once to the library, followed by Ginger.

Then there was a circus and no mistake.

All hands and the cat were in that room waiting for Josiah to show up.

The three ladies, the three boys, Shorty, the Kid and Shanks were all there.

The moment they caught sight of Josiah there was a grand shout.

Everybody had something to say, and said it as loud as possible.

"Why, here's Mr. Burwick, as sure as I live and breathe!"

"Hallo, pop, when did you get home and how are yer!"

"Well, if it ain't grandpop himself, and no one else!"

"How do, papa. We missed you awful coming home."

"Why, Josiah, where have you been all this time?"

"How did you like coming home all alone?"

"Got all you wanted of it this time, didn't you?"

"Why, Mr. Burwick, we're real glad to see you."

Then all hands grabbed that poor Old Man at once.

Two or three of them grabbed him by each hand and seemed quite anxious to pull him apart.

Shorty and the Kid slapped him on the back till he choked.

The three shavers stuck pins in his fat legs and made him howl.

They all talked at once and in the loudest tones.

Poor Josiah was driven fairly wild with the racket, to say nothing of the hustling he got at the hands of his family.

Ginger stood in the background and took in the whole show for nothing.

"My wo'd, dey am glad to see de ole ge'man, an' no mistake."

Poor Josiah! What a hustling he got!

He didn't feel so glad as the gang seemed to, however.

In fact, he was rather sorry that he had found them all at home.

They pulled and hauled and mauled and pinched and hustled and yelled at him, till he did not know if it were he or somebody else.

"Stop, stop! Let me go for goodness sake!" he finally sputtered. "Are you all crazy? You act like a parcel of idiots!"

Then they all broke away, and Josiah tumbled into a big chair very hot, very tired, and exceedingly mad.

"You act like a lot of born fools!" he growled. "Didn't you ever see me before? I wish now I'd stopped out in California. I wouldn't have been mauled to death there."

Oh, yes, he was an awfully nice, mild old fellow, now that he was at home, wasn't he?

He wouldn't be cross to his family any more, would he?

"Why, we're glad to see you, pop, dat's what's der matter," said George with a grin.

At that Mr. Ginger Jones laughed somewhat more boisterously than was prudent.

"How dare you laugh, you black villain?" cried Josiah, grabbing up a boot-jack from a convenient corner, and letting Ginger have it on the noddle.

"Pop's got his old time spirits back again," laughed Shorty. "He'll do, he will."

"Clear out of here, all of you!" stormed the Old Man. "You're a lot of idiots, that's what you are. The idea of going away and leaving me all alone in that hotel. I'll bet it was just one of your practical jokes."

"Well, Josiah Burwick," said Angie, "you always said so much about going home, that we thought maybe you would enjoy it. You did, of course?"

Josiah made no reply to this pertinent remark.

He was too mad to trust himself to say anything.

"Dinner is served," said the footman to Ginger, who now made the announcement in the proper form.

Well, the Shortys were all at home again, and the road trip was ended.

Shanks had made lots of money by the affair, and had enough to last him some time without doing a thing.

All the Shortys had taken out of the trip was their own expenses and the salaries of the company.

Shanks got all the rest, and was a rich man.

"Hang onto dat money, Shanksy, and don't go to taking out any bum shows and losing it all," advised Shorty.

"You bet I won't," said Shanks, "but I'll take you fellers around the world if you'll get up a show."

"No, thanks, old feller," said Shorty. "We've had enough to last us some time."

"We couldn't get Grandpop to go with us, and it wouldn't be any fun without him," added the Kid.

"Then let me take the boys," urged Shanks. "There's plenty of money in them."

"Deir mommas wouldn't let us," said George.

"No, you settle down for a few years, Shanksy," added Charlie.

Shanks concluded that he might as well do so.

He did so for a time, and said no more about going on the road.

Then the boys lost sight of him.

They did not think he had taken out a show, however.

There was really no need of it, and he would have been very foolish if he had.

As for Josiah, fiery horses could not have dragged him out on the road again.

"Don't talk to me about going into the old business just for the fun of it," he ejaculated, when the subject next was mentioned. "I don't see any fun in it whatever, and the next time you go on the road, you leave me behind."

In fact, neither Shorty nor the Kid cared to go again, or not for a long time, at all events, and they did not propose it.

At last accounts the family was living in peace and quietness in their big house on Madison avenue and were having all the fun that the law allows.

Ginger Jones was still with them, of course, and was as important a coon as ever, without the least desire to take to the minstrel business either for fun or for any other cause.

I may find time to tell you more about the family some day, but at present I will give them a rest, and just suggest that you keep your weather eye open for something good from your old friend, the subscriber.